The Yangzhou Storytelling of

Rogue Pi Wu

A Case Study of Yang Mingkun and His Repertoire

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Abstract

Yangzhou *pinghua* is a genre of Chinese chantefables. It is a living tradition with a history of more than 300 years and is listed as China’s intangible cultural heritage. The present research project is designed primarily as a case study of the Yangzhou *pinghua* performance of *Rogue Pi Wu* by Yang Mingkun, the ninth-generation heir of the Pu School of Pi Wu. This study combines methods borrowed from anthropological, linguistic, and literary fields to examine the history and performance of the Yangzhou *pinghua* repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu*.

Through observing both the performance tradition of the Pu School and the repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* performed by Yang, this study finds that the Yangzhou dialect acts as a special channel through which Yang communicates with his audiences in a most effective and intimate way. This study also finds that Yang develops a powerful narrative strategy by skilfully integrating oral narrative with written narrative into a coherent whole. Based on these findings, among others, I argue that Yang achieves a special aesthetic effect for his version of *Rogue Pi Wu* by creatively preserving and developing the Pu School of Pi Wu.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................... ii  
List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... v  
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................... vii  
ONE ......................................................................................................................................... 1  
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1  
      1.1 Yangzhou: The Birth Place of Yangzhou Storytelling .................................................. 2  
      1.2 The Basis of the Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu ........................................... 11  
      1.3 Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 18  
      1.4 Methodology ................................................................................................................ 30  
TWO ...................................................................................................................................... 34  
   The Pu School of Pi Wu ....................................................................................................... 34  
      2.1 The Pu School of Pi Wu in History .............................................................................. 35  
      2.2 Sources of Inspiration for Pu Lin’s Creation ............................................................... 66  
      2.3 Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 76  
THREE .................................................................................................................................  77  
   Performance Space and the Audience ................................................................................ 77  
      3.1 Yang Mingkun and the Pi Wu Story House ................................................................. 78  
      3.2 The Tradition of Yangzhou Story House ..................................................................... 83  
      3.3 The Development of Audience in Yangzhou Storytelling ........................................... 98  
      3.4 Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 105  
FOUR .................................................................................................................................. 106  
   Narrative Features in Yang Mingkun’s Performance .................................................... 106  
      4.1 Preservation ................................................................................................................ 107  
      4.2 Enrichment through Addition and Reduction ............................................................ 116  
      4.3 The Narration of Pi Wu in Yang’s Story ................................................................... 136  
      4.4 Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 142
List of Tables

Table 2.1 Members of the Pu School ................................................................. 37
Table 4.1 Length of the three versions of texts ................................................. 107
Table 4.2 Shared episodes .............................................................................. 110
Table 4.3 Proportion of the various narratives ................................................. 115
Table 4.4 Comparison of episodes in each unit ................................................. 122
Table 4.5 Shared events .................................................................................. 124
Table 5.1 Phonetic realisation of zh-, ch-, sh- and z-, c-, s- ......................... 146
Table 5.2 Phonetic realisation of n- and l- ....................................................... 147
Table 5.3 Phonetic realisation of r-................................................................. 148
Table 5.4 Phonetic realisation of -ng and -n ................................................... 148
Table 5.5 Syllables with two phonetic realisations in Yang’s diction .......... 150
Table 5.6 Set of abbreviated realisations of disyllable by Yang.................... 151
Table 5.7 Phonological system of the Yangzhou dialect ................................. 152
Table 5.8 Initial realisation [n-] and [l-]............................................................ 153
Table 5.9 Finals in the Beijing dialect ............................................................. 154
Table 5.10 -zi in Yang’s diction ...................................................................... 157
Table 5.11 -tou in Yang’s diction ................................................................. 158
Table 5.12 Collocations of verb chi .............................................................. 159
Table 5.13 Disyllabic and trisyllabic reduplication words in Yang’s diction.... 161
Table 5.14 Address forms in Yang’s diction ................................................... 161
Table 5.15 Reduplication words in the Yangzhou dialect ............................. 163
Table 5.16 Address forms in the Yangzhou dialect ....................................... 164
Table 5.17 Fragments of Mid-Chinese pronunciation (I) ............................. 169
Table 5.18 Fragments of Mid-Chinese pronunciation (II)................................. 169
Table 6.1 Pu’s verses and Yang’s proses............................................................. 177
Table 6.2 Number of dialect words explained in the three texts....................... 179
Table 6.3 Words in the three texts .................................................................... 180
Table 6.4 Introduction to Pi Wu........................................................................ 181
Table 7.1 Phonetic features in square mouth and round................................. 216
List of Figures

Figure 1.1 A narrow lane restricted to one person ........................................3
Figure 1.2 A wood hall built in the private garden in Qing times ....................5
Figure 1.3 Outside of the private garden built in Qing times ........................6
Figure 1.4 Yang Mingkun performs Yangzhou storytelling .............................11
Figure 1.5 Three versions of performance-style transcribed texts published in 2015,
1996, and 1985 respectively .................................................................16
Figure 3.1 A waiter dressed in the Qing style stands at the door of Pi Wu Story House;
side wall to the gate of Pi Wu Story House ............................................78
Figure 3.2 The audience in the Pi Wu Story House enjoying the traditional morning
tea ........................................................................................................78
Figure 3.3 The Stage in the Pi Wu Story House ...........................................79
Figure 3.4 The background of the stage in the Pi Wu Story House .................80
Figure 3.5 Han pottery figurine performing storytelling/singing .....................83
Figure 3.6 Han wood figurine playing storytelling/singing .............................84
Figure 3.7 Map of Jiaochang ...................................................................90
Figure 3.8 Jie Nan Story House .................................................................93
Figure 7.1 Yang Mingkun performs the story of Pi Wu ..................................224
Pi Wu Lazi

皮五辣子
ONE

Introduction

Equally divided into three is the beauty of moonlight scenes of the world

Two of them are undoubtedly in Yangzhou.¹

— Xu Ning 徐凝 (fl. 813)

As a genre of Chinese narrative art, Yangzhou storytelling (Yangzhou pinghua 揚州評話) appeared in Yangzhou between the late Ming 明 (1368-1644) and early Qing 清 (1616-1912) dynasties. The Yangzhou pinghua repertoire of Pi Wu lazi 皮五辣子 (Rogue Pi Wu) was created in Yangzhou around the Qianlong 乾隆 (1735-1796) era and has since been passed down to the present period. It is performed by Yang Mingkun 楊明坤 (1949-) today.

In this chapter, I will examine some historical aspects of Yangzhou city that is reflected in the narrative of Rogue Pi Wu recited by Yang Mingkun and the basics of the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu. By referring to the historical documents related to Yangzhou pinghua and contemporary studies on the history of Yangzhou city, I aim to point out that Yang’s repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu is of great research value to the study on Yangzhou storytelling. In addition, I will introduce the origin and value of this thesis and the methodology adopted for the present research.

¹ All translations of Chinese terms and texts in this thesis, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.
1.1 Yangzhou: The Birth Place of Yangzhou Storytelling

The repertoire of Pi Wu currently performed in the Yangzhou dialect by Yang Mingkun was created in the Qing Qianlong era. The narrative of the story is focused on the daily experiences of Yangzhou people in the Qing dynasty. The geographical features, economic and cultural status of Yangzhou during the Qing dynasty, and even the linguistic features of the Yangzhou dialect are reflected in the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu.

Yangzhou has a history of more than 2,500 years. It is an inland prefecture-level city in the central part of modern Jiangsu province, situated on the north bank of the Yangtze River and southeast of the Huai River. Known in history as “Huai zuo ming du” or “a famed city to the east of the Huai River,” Yangzhou replaced the old name of Guangling during the Sui dynasty (581-618) to designate the area of what constitutes present-day Yangzhou. Constructed as a military base in 486 BC, Yangzhou was initially called Hancheng. The Hangou Canal, known as the first waterway in history to connect the Huai and Yangtze Rivers, was constructed in the same year as Hancheng, also primarily for military purposes. The Han Canal is the oldest extant part of the Grand Canal of China, linking the Yellow River and the Yangtze River.

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The construction of Yangzhou in the early imperial period was mainly due to its strategic importance, and the city became a national centre of economy and culture during the late medieval period and remained so for more than one thousand year until the early nineteenth century.

Yangzhou is one of the most famous historical and cultural cities in China. Its beauty and charm was portrayed by the great poet of the Tang dynasty (618-907) Li Bai 李白 (701-762) in Huanghelou song Meng Haoran zhi Guangling 黃鶴樓送孟浩然之廣陵 (“Seeing Off Meng Hao-ran at Yellow-crane Tower on His Going to the Broad Mound [Yang-chou]”), a heptasyllabic quatrain (qiyan jueju 七言絕句). The poem reads:4

My old friend farewell—West!—from Yellow-crane Tower;
But in mist-and-flower April down to Yang-chou heads!
His lone sail’s far silhouette dies into the azure air,
And I only see the Yangtze flowing to horizon edge.

As one of the most beautiful historical cities in China, Yangzhou features many lanes, rivers, bridges and private gardens, as vividly described in Yang’s version of Rogue Pi Wu. The city is crisscrossed here and there by ancient lanes and streets paved with stone slabs and pebbles. There are more than 600 lanes within a small area of no more than seven square kilometres.5 Some of the names of the lanes in Yangzhou are

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5 Huang Jilin 黃繼林, *Yangzhou mingxiang 揚州名巷 (Well-known Lanes in Yangzhou City)*, (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2005), 15; 34-40
recorded in *Rogue Pi Wu* as recited by Yang Mingkun, such as Mingwa 明瓦 Lane, Yiren 一人 Lane (Figure 1.1) and Baizi 百子 Lane.\(^6\)

The Grand Canal connecting North China and South China has a significant impact on the development of Yangzhou from the Sui to the Qing dynasties. Over this long period, the advancement of waterway transportation, the salt industry and trade determined the economic position of Yangzhou in the imperial era. Yangzhou experienced two golden ages in history, one in the Tang and the other in the Qing era. During the Tang Dynasty, Yangzhou was the greatest commercial centre and port of trade in the country and also became the centre of salt monopoly government in the late Tang era.\(^7\) This is reflected in the well-known folk saying, “Yangyi Yier” 揚一益二, which suggests that Yangzhou was the greatest commercial port with Yizhou 益州 (modern Chengdu 成都) coming second in place during the Tang era.\(^8\) Yangzhou is located at the centre of the Jiang-Huai 江淮 area between the Yangtze and Huai rivers and situated at the junction of the Grand Canal and the Yangtze River. When shuttling between the northern and southern cities by waterway or land, commuters would have to pass by Yangzhou. Thus, Yangzhou partly owed its prosperity to the growing traffic between the north and the south. In the Tang times, “It became a hub of interregional and even foreign trade and played host to a large population of merchants from inner and western Asia.”\(^9\)

\(^6\) Yin Boda 殷伯達, et al. (eds.), (transcribed from Yang Mingkun’s repertoire), *Pi Wu lazi 皮五辣子 (Rogue Pi Wu)*, (Nanjing: Jiangsu fenghuang wenyi chubanshe, 2015), 711; 294; 68.
\(^8\) Wei Minghua 韋明鐸, *Eeshisi qiao mingyue ye, Yangzhou 二十四橋明月夜, 揚州 (The Twenty-fourth Bridge at the Night with a Bright Moon, Yangzhou)*, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), 232-33.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

It was the waterway system that made Yangzhou the centre of north-south trade and communication in late Imperial China, which subsequently gave the false impression that Yangzhou was located in the wealthiest area south of the Yangtze River during the Qing dynasty, which was traditionally known as Jiangnan 江南. In the story of Rogue Pi Wu recited by Yang Mingkun, when Pi Wu pretends to be a Guangdong merchant living in a luxurious ship to cheat others, no one questions his identity because during the Qing era, it is common to meet wealthy merchants in Yangzhou, given the convenient waterway transportation. The description of the prosperous port is as follows:

Xiao Xizi goes to the most massive port and sees various types and sizes of boats floating on the river. [...] He says to himself, “Here are cargo ships, manned vessels, garbage ships, but where is the mansion-on-water (shui gongguan 水公館) of the Guangdong merchant?”

The phrase “mansion-on-water” implies that the boat is as luxurious and spacious as a mansion on land.

During the Qing dynasty, the salt monopoly provided the financial foundations for Yangzhou to become one of the most prosperous and wealthiest cities in China. According to

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10 Chen Xiaomei 陳曉梅 and Qingyang 秦揚, Yangzhou mingshui 揚州名水 (Well-known Rivers in Yangzhou), (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2005), 113-20.
11 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 620-21.
the accounting details in the *Yanye timing beiji* (Tablet Inscription of Famous Names from the Salt Industry) by Li Fayuan 李發元 (ca.1684-ca.1769), more than half of the Empire’s salt tax revenue came from Yangzhou. Furthermore, the Grand Canal conferred importance on Yangzhou, the main port of the only north-south waterway route, as the centre of interregional communication and trade, as well as significantly contributing to the re-emergence of Yangzhou as one of the principal commercial cities in late Imperial China. Liang-huai 兩淮 merchants had a stable, close relationship with the central government, and they were rich enough to be considered as a private bank of the imperial court to fund natural disaster relief and the country’s infrastructure. Due to the emperors’ travels to Yangzhou as favoured by the Emperors from the Qing dynasty, there was a strong influence from the north. “With frequent travels by Qing emperors Kangxi and Qianlong, the typical architectural features of the Imperial Palace were incorporated into the construction of gardens in Yangzhou, including covered walkways, gazebos and pavilions.”

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12 Wu, “Qingdai Liang-huai yanye zhongyaoxing zhi dingliang fenxi”, 3; Chen and Qing, *Yangzhou mingshui*, 120.
13 Hu Ming 胡明 and Pan Baoming 潘寳明 (eds.), *Yangzhou Wenhua gaiguan* (Outline of Yangzhou Culture), (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 1993), 16.
14 Wei, *Eeshisi qiao mingyue ye, Yangzhou*, 61-4; Wang, *Yangzhou sanji*, 39-40. The large area on both sides of the Huai River directly to the north of the Yangtze River is called Liang-huai. Yangzhou is one of the important cities of the Liang-huai area. Most of the Qing Liang-huai merchants are not locals of Yangzhou but come from Shaanxi 陕西, Shanxi 山西, Anhui 安徽, Zhejiang 浙江, Jiangxi 江西, Hubei 湖北 and other cities of Jiangsu.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

We can only imagine how luxurious these private gardens must have been in the Qing dynasty, as some even functioned as palaces for imperial travel. In the story Rogue Pi Wu told by Yang Mingkun, Pi Wu buys a luxurious garden house when he becomes rich. The narrative on the decoration in the garden house is as follows.\textsuperscript{16}

This is a garden house built with nine suites. He goes through the first and second, and then the third. He is shocked to see chairs and long desks made of precious wood, and antiques and paintings. There are lots of porcelain, jade articles, carved wooden furniture and bronze wares in the third hall. Pi Wu looks around and says to himself, “Oh my god! The chairs and long desks, antiques and paintings here, any one of them is worth around twenty thousand taels silver.” […] The fourth and fifth halls are decorated in the same style.

Above is a description of a private garden house in Qing Yangzhou: valuable antiques and paintings filled in the hall, the chairs and desks were made of precious wood, and exquisite halls and rooms were built in the garden (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). Nearly all the owners of these private gardens were salt merchants. Qing Yangzhou experienced its second golden period when salt merchants from Shanxi, Shaanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang arrived in Yangzhou to conduct business. The wealth these merchants brought to Yangzhou provided an excellent opportunity for garden builders to exchange their experiences and put their design skills into practice, significantly contributing to the now renowned Yangzhou garden arts. In addition, wealthy merchants were interested in decorating their gardens with valuable antiques and

\textsuperscript{16} Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 664.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

paintings to exhibit their wealth. Hence, it is not surprising to find expensive furniture in Pi Wu’s house.

During the Qing dynasty, the commercial activities of sojourning merchants strengthened the position of Yangzhou as a significant economic and cultural centre in the empire and also made Yangzhou the capital of luxury and consumption in China.17

Merchants from near and afar came to Yangzhou to earn money. This is vividly described in the story of Pi Wu as follows:18

Yao Er, the boss of the fur shop, is from Shanxi; Wang Youcai, the owner of Fusheng Yuan teahouse, is from Nanjing; Great-grandfather Wang Er, the owner of the pawn shop, is from Zhenjiang.

However, it should be noted that very few Yangzhou residents were engaged in commercial activities with the sojourning merchants for profit.19 In contrast to the wealthy provincial merchants, ordinary Yangzhou locals preferred to live a practical, low-profile life. The ordinary houses of Qing Yangzhou were simple, built according to the shape of the streets and lanes, adopting the concept of “Take things as they are.” With a few exceptions, most ordinary houses were built with a courtyard (tianjing) inside for lighting, ventilation and drainage. Sometimes, the courtyard also

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17 Ke Ling, Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue (Look at the Folklore of Qing Yangzhou from a Folk-custom View), (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2006), 278-93; Sun Chuanyu, Yangzhou mingyuan (Well-known Gardens in Yangzhou), (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2005), 14-20; Wu Jiankun, Zhao Lichang, et al. (eds.), Yangzhou Mingzhai (Well-known Mansions in Yangzhou), (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2005), 38-45.
18 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 629; 248; 511.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

functioned as a drawing room. In Yang’s narrative of Rogue Pi Wu, Wang Youcai, the owner of Fusheng Yuan teahouse, turns the courtyard attached to his house into a drawing room to accommodate more people. The description is: “Go through the hall, a small courtyard is found. In the yard, there are four big water vats. […] Now, many people are sitting on the vat covers.”

Yangzhou’s geographic features and Yangzhou dialect find vivid expression in Yang Mingkun’s narrative of Rogue Pi Wu. As will be shown by a linguistic analysis in this thesis of the text of Rogue Pi Wu performed by Yang Mingkun, the development of the Yangzhou dialect has a close connection with several waves of the southward migration in history. The Yangzhou dialect developed from the interaction between the northern and southern dialects, especially the Wu dialects in the Sui and early Tang periods, and its growth had always been accompanied by such an interaction.

Following the collapse of the Ming dynasty, the Manchu Qing General Duoduo 多鐸 (1614-1649) ordered a ten-day massacre, killing almost eighty to ninety per cent of Yangzhou residents. After this slaughter, large numbers of immigrants from the north and south of China arrived in Yangzhou. This was not the first large-scale migration to Yangzhou as several periods of southward migration to the Jiang-Huai area, including Yangzhou, had taken place since the late Western Jin 西晉 dynasty (AD 266-316). One such event happened when a repopulation policy was issued and applied in the Jiang-Huai area during the Southern Song 南宋 dynasty (1127-1279) to

20 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 248.
22 Huang, Yangzhou mingxiang, 135; Wang, Yangzhou sanji, 34.
obtain resources to strengthen defences. The several waves of migration that took place from the Western Jin dynasty onwards greatly influenced the development of the Yangzhou dialect. Such linguistic evidence is apparent in *Rogue Pi Wu* performed by Yang Mingkun (see Chapter 5.3).

The modern Yangzhou dialect is one sub-dialect grouping of Jiang-Huai Mandarin. The foundation of the Jiang-Huai Mandarin group known today was laid firmly by immigrants principally from the north in the late Northern Song (960-1127) and early Southern Song dynasties. The phonological system of the Yangzhou dialect follows that of the Mandarin dialect or the Northern dialect group, while retaining some phonetic features of the Southern dialects, such as literary and colloquial reading (*wenbai yidu* 文白異讀) and *rusheng* 入声 Middle Chinese (MC) entering tone. It also presents unique features such as *podu* 破讀 reading. These

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24 Zhang Bin 張斌, Xinbian xiandai Hanyu 新編現代漢語 (New Edition of Modern Chinese Language), (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2002), 5-7; Margaret Mian Yan, Introduction to Chinese Dialectology (Muenchen: LINCOM GmbH, 2006), 1-3, 60-86. There are seven major dialects within the Chinese language family: Mandarin, Wu, Cantonese, Gan, Hakka, Min and Xiang. The Mandarin dialect has four sub-dialect groups: Northern Mandarin 北方官話, Southwestern Mandarin 西南官話, Northwestern Mandarin 西北官話, and Jiang-Huai 江淮 or Lower Yangtze Mandarin 下江官話.
25 Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed”, 534.
26 In modern Chinese dialects, a syllable can have two different phonetic realisations: colloquial pronunciation, derived from the realisation of daily talking, and literary pronunciation, derived from the realisation of literary reading. Literary and colloquial pronunciations commonly exist in Southern dialects, especially in the Min and Wu dialect groups. At the present time, the Yangzhou dialect belongs to the Northern dialect group; however, it retains more than fifty syllables containing literary and colloquial pronunciations.

Entering tone is one of the four syllable types in the phonology in Middle Chinese. Although translated as “tone,” an entering tone is not a tone in the phonetic sense but a syllable that ends in a stop consonant or a glottal stop.
27 *Podu* refers to the situation in which the tone, final or initial of a morpheme is changed when distinguishing different but related lexical or syntactic meanings of a morpheme, or two morphemes that share a phonetic realisation. Usually, *podu* phonetic realisation follows the phonological system of the modern Northern dialects.
linguistic characteristics have won Yangzhou dialect a reputation of “being neither southern nor northern; being southern and northern as well” (bu nan bu bei, yi nan yi bei 不南不北，亦南亦北) (see Chapter 5).

The repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu performed by Yang Mingkun is of great value to scholars of historical linguistics and dialectology. The narrative also reflects the social context of Yangzhou in the Qing dynasty, which provides a fascinating window into the daily life of the ordinary people of Qing Yangzhou.

1.2 The Basis of the Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

The repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu performed by Yang Mingkun is a form of Yangzhou pinghua and is a typical style of traditional Chinese performing arts. In Chinese scholarship, the term *shuochang* 说唱 (storytelling and story singing) belongs to the category of oral performance art (*quyi* 曲藝).

Yangzhou storytelling is included in the *quyi* category with other styles of oral performance art, such as Yangzhou plucked-string ballads (*xianci* 弦詞), Suzhou 蘇州 plucked-string chantefable (*tanci* 弹詞), Suzhou storytelling, and Jingjiang 靖江 scriptures telling (*jiangjing* 讲經). Among the styles of Yangzhou narrative arts performance, Yangzhou storytelling is the most influential. It enjoyed popularity in Qing Yangzhou and is still performed today. It is a style of group, and the original realisation retains the phonetic tradition of the Middle Chinese dictionary. See Wang Shihua 王世華, “Yangzhou kouyu zhong de podu” *Yangzhou口語中的破讀* (“Podu Realisations in Oral Yangzhou Dialect”), *Yangzhou shiyuan xuebao shehui kexue ban 1* (1986): 108-11.
Chinese chantefables listed as China’s intangible cultural heritage.

Yangzhou storytelling refers to the professional performance of telling stories in prose without music accompaniment, predominantly in the Yangzhou dialect. Both Yangzhou and Suzhou storytelling feature a single storyteller seated at a table who performs without musical instruments, telling exciting tales of heroes and adventure. Differing from these two styles, Yangzhou and Suzhou chantefable feature pairs of storytellers who specialize in telling lengthy love stories that incorporate prominent singing roles accompanied by stringed instruments. The props used by the chantefable storytellers include one or two large folding fans, a water glass, a handkerchief, and a small rectangular block made of jade, wood, or horn called talking stopper (*xingmu* 醒木). The Yangzhou storytelling performance arena provides an example in point. In the story house (*shuchang* 書場) or teahouse (*chaguan* 茶館), the performer is dressed in traditional costume and tells a story while sitting behind a small square desk with a *xingmu* and a teapot on it and holds a folding fan (*zheshan* 摺扇) (Figure 1.4). This is the setting of a typical Yangzhou storytelling performance.

The history of Yangzhou storytelling can be traced back to the Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279). During the Song period, professional storytelling flourished in the entertainment districts of urban centres in the capital cities of Bianliang 汴梁 (present-day Kaifeng 開封) and Lin’an 臨安 (present-day Hangzhou 杭州), Yangzhou, and

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30 All photos presented in the thesis are taken by the author.
Suzhou in the South.\textsuperscript{31} Hu Shiying 胡士瑩 (1901-1979) states that:\textsuperscript{32}

*Pinghua*, following the tradition of the performance of historical tale-telling (*jiangshi* 講史) from the Song and Yuan dynasties, was very well developed in the Qing dynasty. Initially, the city of Yangzhou was the centre of *pinghua* performing arts, after which many other cities developed their own vernacular storytelling. However, the centre of *pinghua* performing arts remains in Yangzhou.

According to Hu, the *jiangshi* of the Song dynasty was the fountainhead of Yangzhou storytelling. Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1587-1670), Kong Yunxiao 孔雲霄 (fl. ca.1650) and Han Guihu 韓圭湖 (fl. ca.1600) were named as Yangzhou *pinghua* master storytellers by Li Dou 李鬥 (1749-1817) in the *Yangzhou huafang lu* 揚州畫舫錄 (*Reminiscences from the Pleasure Boats of Yangzhou*).\textsuperscript{33}

The repertoires of Yangzhou storytelling are mostly adapted from Ming and Qing chapter-division novel (*zhanghui xiaoshuo* 章回小說). Yangzhou storytellers recreate stories of their own by incorporating and adapting splendid plots of these novels.\textsuperscript{34} The most noteworthy of these are the *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (*The Water Margin*), the *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), and the *Xiyou*
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

ji 西遊記 (Journey to the West). Today, we often hear of Wang Shaotang 王少堂 (1899-1968) as a master storyteller. His repertoire has been revered as the Wang School of The Water Margin.

Only a few Yangzhou pinghua repertoires performed in Qing times were created independently from the tradition of Chinese fiction. Of the ten storytelling performances mentioned by Li Dou in his Reminiscences from the Pleasure Boats of Yangzhou, only three are new creations. These are the Qingfengzha 清風閘 (Pure-Wind Dyke), the Feituo zhuan 飛駝傳 (Legend of Flying Hunchback) and the Yangzhou hua 揚州話 (Story of Yangzhou Dialect). In his A Brief History of Chinese Fiction, Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) explained the reason for the appearance of several newly created repertoires in Qing times. He said: “Men’s tastes change with the times, and as readers grew tired of old books, new trends developed.” This also explains the reason for the emergence of newly created repertoires of Yangzhou storytelling in Qing times, namely Legend of Flying Hunchback, Story of Yangzhou Dialect, and Pure-Wind Dyke, the last of which has also been referred to as Pi Wu lazi or Rogue Pi Wu since 1985.

Legend of Flying Hunchback and Story of Yangzhou Dialect fail to survive, and only Rogue Pi Wu remains extant. It is hence an important representative of the repertoire created in Qing times. Rogue Pi Wu is also known as the “Pu School of Pi Wu” (Pu men Pi Wu 蒲門皮五). The present storyteller of the repertoire is Yang Mingkun, the ninth-generation inheritor of the Pu School. He is a national first-class actor and a member of the Chinese Artists Association. In 1990, he was recognized as

35 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 258.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

one of the “Ten National Eminent storytellers” together with nine other artists, including Jiang Kun 姜昆 (1950-), Liu Lanfang 劉蘭芳 (1944-), and Tian Lianyuan 田連元 (1941-).

Pure-Wind Dyke can be read as an autobiography of the author; it also records the scenes of Yangzhou during the Qing dynasty. According to the story performed by Yang Mingkun, Pure-Wind Dyke is set in the Song dynasty.\(^{37}\) It was initially created in Yangzhou by Pu Lin 蒲琳 (fl.1780) who lived during the reign of Qianlong. Also known as Pu Tianyu 蒲天玉, Pu Lin was the author and first performer of Pure-Wind Dyke.\(^{38}\) Pi Wu 皮五 is the nickname of the protagonist Pi Fengshan 皮鳳山 in Pure-Wind Dyke.\(^{38}\) It is derived from the fanqie 反切 of the author’s surname Pu 蒲.\(^{39}\) As Li Dou states in the Yangzhou huafang lu:\(^{40}\)

Yangzhou storytelling is not difficult to perform but the existing repertoire is very familiar to the people. So based on his life experience, Pu wrote a story called Pure-Wind Dyke and the main character was named Pi Wu.

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37 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 203.
38 The full name of the protagonist is Pi Fengshan 皮奉山 in all versions of the text, but Hu Shiying wrote it in the form of Pi 村三 in Huaben xiaoshuo gailun. 山 and 三 share identical phonetic realisation in the Yangzhou dialect.
39 Fanqie is a style of notation used by Chinese scholars since the end of the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) to indicate the pronunciation of a word. In a fanqie, one takes the initial of the first word and the final of the second word: the two pieces added together give the pronunciation of the word being glossed. See Michael A. Fuller, *An Introduction to Literary Chinese*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2004): 83-4. For example, we can use the initial of 皮 皮 (Chinese surname; skin) and the final, the tone of 五 五 (five) to indicate the pronunciation of 蒲 Pu (Chinese surname).
40 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 205.
As shown above, the story of Pure-Wind Dyke is based on Pu Lin’s life experiences in Yangzhou during the Qing dynasty. The geography and culture presented through his story reflects that of Yangzhou during the Qing dynasty. Fortunately, this narrative on Qing Yangzhou city has been well preserved and handed down to the present storyteller Yang Mingkun. Yang stated his view as follows:

“I think as a pinghua storyteller, I should take the responsibility of propagating our Yangzhou traditional culture. Differing from other Yangzhou pinghua repertoires, the repertoire of Pi Wu was born in Yangzhou and deeply rooted in the traditional local culture. I should preserve it well in my generation and transmit it to my apprentices.”

The Yangzhou storytelling of Pure-Wind Dyke/Rogue Pi Wu also exists in written forms, some of which are performance-style texts. This study will use three

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42 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
43 Rostislav Berezkin, “The Development of the Mulian Story in Baojuan Texts (14th-19th century) in Connection with the Evolution of the Genre”, (Ph.D. diss., the University of Pennsylvania, 2010): 34. According to Berezkin, the term “performance-style text” was suggested by Anne E. McLaren to describe the texts of the 15th century, or stories with passages in verse (cihua 詞話), discovered in the Xuan family tomb in Jiading county near Shanghai in
versions of these performance-style texts as primary materials (Figure 1.5). All the storytellers of *Pure-Wind Dyke/Rogue Pi Wu* have their own unique features and distinctive aspects to their performance, but so far only Pu Lin, Yu Youchun (1919-1995), and Yang Mingkun had their performances recorded in books or videos. The Fengxiaoxuan 奉孝軒 edition of *Pure-Wind Dyke* was published by Meixi zhuren 梅溪主人 (Master of Plum Spring) (ca.1711-1799) in the twenty-fourth year of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796-1820) era of the Qing dynasty. The publisher was not familiar with Pu Lin’s repertoire and the motive for publication was mainly profit based. As a result, the Fengxiaoxuan edition of *Pure-Wind Dyke* is different from Pu Lin’s repertoire in many ways, ranging from storyline to theme. The Huaxuanzhai 華軒斎 edition of *Pure-Wind Dyke* was published in the first year of Daoguang 道光 (1821-1850), which was based on Pu Lin’s repertoire and reprinted in the thirteenth year of Tongzhi 同治 (1861-1875) era. In 1996, the Huaxuanzhai edition of *Pure-Wind Dyke* was reprinted. Based on the repertoire of Yu Youchun, two books were published in 1985, titled *Rogue Pi Wu* and *Pure-Wind Dyke*, respectively. The year 2015 witnessed the publication of a text and video of *Rogue Pi Wu* based on the repertoire of Yang

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1967. Berezkin applied this in the dissertation to designate the texts that reveal features of the traditional oral literature but have reached us only in written form. In the present research, I apply it to refer to the text transcribed from the Yangzhou pinghua repertoire of the Qingfengzha performed by Pu Lin and the Pi Wu lazi by Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun.

44 Wang Yingzhi 王穎芝, et al. (eds.), (transcribed from Pu Lin’s repertoire), *Qingfengzha 清風閘 (Pure-Wind Dyke)*, (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1996); Wang Cheng 王澄, et al. (eds.), (transcribed from Yu Youchun’s repertoire), *Pi Wu lazi 皮五辣子 (Rogue Pi Wu)*, (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1985); Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*.


46 Wang et al. (eds.), *Qingfengzha*, 5.
Mingkun. Yang Mingkun’s oral performance of the *Pi Wu lazi* was recorded on video in 2015.47

Like other genres of Chinese chantefables, Yangzhou *pinghua* has a strong affinity with the tale-telling tradition in the Song dynasty and is still performed in Yangzhou today. Differing from most of the Yangzhou *pinghua* repertoires from the Qing dynasty which are adapted from the well-known traditional Chinese fiction, the repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* was newly created in Qing times and has been successfully transmitted to present times. The Huaxuanzhai edition of *Qingfengzha* reprinted in 1996, the *Pi Wu lazi* published in 1985, and the *Pi Wu lazi* published in 2015 are the three texts transcribed from the repertoires of Pi Wu by Pu Lin, Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun respectively.

As mentioned above, the repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* is of great historical value in the fields of performance literature and dialectology. Also, Yang’s repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* offers a good case study on the current status of Yangzhou *pinghua*, which is less researched.

1.3 Literature Review

Of all the research related to Yangzhou storytelling, the most noteworthy is the work conducted by Vibeke Bør Dahl. She devoted her work to observing and exploring the manner of master Yangzhou *pinghua* storytellers and the tradition of the repertoire of *The Water Margin* by Wang Shaotang and other members of the Wang school. In

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47 *Pi Wu lazi* (oral performance by Yang Mingkun), (Jiangsu Phoenix Electronic Audio and Video Publishing House, 2015). The complete video set consists of fifty discs.
her work, Børdahl was also interested in revealing the interactions between the oral and written traditions in Chinese storytelling, novels and drama.48

To the best of my knowledge, eight articles concerning the storytelling of Pure-Wind Dyke/Rogue Pi Wu have been published so far; seven of which focus on the transcribed texts of Pure-Wind Dyke and Rogue Pi Wu. In addition, the Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji 皮五辣子論文集 (Collected Essays on Rogue Pi Wu) was published to celebrate the publication of the text of Rogue Pi Wu transcribed from Yang Mingkun’s repertoire in 2015.49 While the Chinese word “lunwen” 論文 refers to academic papers or scholarly essays, all the essays in Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji are non-research works concerning the story of Pi Wu, the life experiences of Yang Mingkun, and the Yangzhou dialect, with the only exception of an article titled “Shijing xiaoshuo de zhongyao daibiao” 市井小說的重要代表 (“The Major Representative of the Urban-culture Fiction”) by Dong Guoyan 董國炎, a scholar from Yangzhou University.50

The study of the Yangzhou pinghua of Pure-Wind Dyke/Rogue Pi Wu in performance has been overshadowed by a tendency to regard it as written literature. As Anne E. McLaren discussed, most scholars working on literary analysis are concerned with genre categorisation, sources, literary adaption and aesthetic the issues of chantefables.51 From the studies by Dong Guoyan, Liu Chongyi 劉重一, Cao

49 Song Hongfa 宋洪發, et al. (eds.) Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, (Nanjing: Jiangsu fenghuang wenyi chubanshe, 2015)
50 Dong Guoyan, “Shijing xiaoshuo de zhongyao daibiao”, in Song et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 195-213.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Xiaoyun 曹小雲, Margaret Baptist Wan and Liu Liu, it is evident that the analysis of Pure-Wind Dyke/Rogue Pi Wu has been based on the literary rather than performance criteria. In their articles, Liu Chongyi, Cao Xiaoyun, Liu Liu, Dong Guoyan and Margaret Baptist Wan devoted their work to the regional features of the story of Pi Wu. They explained a number of dialect words and aspects of local culture and customs found in the written text of Pure-Wind Dyke and Rogue Pi Wu. In the process, Wan also focused on the account found in the preface of Pure-Wind Dyke and considers the life experiences of the author and the publisher. However, their explanations merely serve as an introduction to understanding the regional features of the story. Indeed, Yangzhou dialect words act as a vital comedic element in the comical presentation of the story but the local culture and customs reflect the exact environment in which the story was created and transmitted.

Dong Guoyan explored the developmental progress of the story of Pi Wu by comparing the image of Pi Wu in Pure-Wind Dyke with that in Rogue Pi Wu. Dong pointed out that the development of the story is a result of storytellers turning reality into plotlines. However, he did not substantiate his argument by referring to historical documents or the transcribed texts of Pure-Wind Dyke or Rogue Pi Wu. Moreover, he did not consider the social context of the storytellers and the demands of the audiences when exploring the characteristic features of the image of Pi Wu.


53 Dong Guoyan, “Lun shijing xiaoshuo de shenhua fazhan—cong Qingfengzha dao Pi Wu lazi”; “Lun Qingfengzha de yanbian he yiyi”; “Shijing xiaoshuo de zhongyao daibiao”.
Liu Chongyi and Margaret Baptist Wan draw our attention to the sources of inspiration Pu Lin used to create the story of *Pure-Wind Dyke* in the Qing era. Liu compared the plotline in *Pure-Wind Dyke* with those in the well-known court-case fiction and argues that *Pure-Wind Dyke* is a legal case story. Wan listed some of the contemporary literary works available to Pu Lin and discussed the relationship between these works and the story of *Pure-Wind Dyke* through a comparative analysis of the plots. Based on this approach, the discussion is convincing and reliable.

The performance aspect in the Yangzhou storytelling of *Pure-Wind Dyke/Rogue Pi Wu* fail to receive as much attention as its literary aspects. This is particularly true when it comes to the analysis of the storyteller’s narrative in the performance. While making significant contributions to the study of the storytelling of *Pure-Wind Dyke/Rogue Pi Wu*, the articles mentioned above treat Yangzhou storytelling primarily as written literature. However, Yangzhou storytelling is first and foremost a genre of performing arts. It is important to consider the performance aspects, such as the stylistic and linguistic features of the performance speech, the performance space, the composition of the audience or the intention of the storyteller in his recitation. Hence, this study will attempt to provide a comprehensive and in-depth observation of this art.

As a style of traditional Chinese performing arts, the performance aspect of Yangzhou storytelling is also significant. This research focuses on the factors and elements concerning performance speech, the performance space, and the storyteller’s acting features and life experience. Børdahl has established a strong foundation in this

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21 / 251
regard. She paid close attention to the acting characteristics of the storytellers of the Wang School, focusing on the five skills used by Yangzhou pinghua storytellers in their performance, namely mouth (kou 口), hand (shou 手), body (shēn 身), step (bu 步), and facial expression (shén 神). She examined the narrative devices and the speaking styles used by storytellers. In exploration of the traditions of the Yangzhou storytelling and speaking styles (shuokou 說口) of storytellers, she also analysed linguistic features of the Yangzhou dialect in terms of stylistics, phonetics, phonology, and grammar and observes closely the performance language used by storytellers.

She identified linguistic features specific to pinghua storytellers in their individual performances. Furthermore, based on the linguistic analyses, she interpreted the performance manner of Yangzhou pinghua storytellers as exemplified by the Wang School.

Vibeke Børdahl, Margaret Baptist Wan, Cathryn Fairlee, and Dong Guoyan considered the backgrounds of the storytellers, including their education and education and education and

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56 “Speaking styles” refers to various ways of speaking by performers in narrative arts performance, and it is related to the registers of narration. Round mouth (yuankou 圓口) and square mouth (fangkou 方口) are the two styles frequently adopted by Yangzhou pinghua storytellers.

The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Fairlee gave a comprehensive introduction to all the storytellers known for narrating the story of Pure-Wind Dyke or Rogue Pi Wu generation by generation, including all the Pu School members. She introduced the storytellers’ lives and performance experiences but did not refer to historical documents related to the master storytellers of Pure-Wind Dyke and the thoughts of the present Pu School member Yang Mingkun. The performance style of an individual storyteller has a strong connection to his life experiences. Indeed, members of the Pu School have the responsibility of preserving the tradition of the school, such as their speaking styles and mouth acrobatics. At the same time, their lives and performance experiences influence their performance styles in recreating the imagery of Pi Wu, developing the plotlines, and adjusting their speaking styles. This will be discussed in the present study.

Fei Li 費力 and Vibeke Børdahl also paid attention to the tradition of the storyhouse in Yangzhou. In their studies, they introduced the setting of the stage, the service provided in the storyhouse, and the audience members. However, they did not explore the tradition by referring to historical documents, which would substantiate the discussion.

The aesthetic concerns for the Yangzhou storytelling performance are ignored. Although the above scholar focused on some aspects or factors of the performance, such as storytellers’ life experiences, acting skills, performance space and speech, they


The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

have ignored the relationship between these factors and the aesthetic effects of the repertoire in their studies on Yangzhou storytelling. However, it was the aesthetic effects of schools of repertoires that attracted a big audience in history and thus the traditions of Yangzhou storytelling survived during the past three centuries.

In this study, I will explore on how to construct a framework where the examination on the aesthetic effects, the tradition and the current status, the living performance features, and the performance-style text of the repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School are combined. I will focus on examining the storyteller’s personal comments and fresh understanding of the repertoire, and his narrative strategies and goals in performance; and how to analyse the storyteller’s three roles as being a member of the Pu School: a tradition bearer of the Pu School; an adapter to the inherited repertoire story of Pi Wu; and a performer of the repertoire of Pi Wu.

John Miles Foley’s theoretical framework in his work The Singer of Tales in Performance evokes a convincing framework for understanding the Yangzhou storytelling, where Pu School’s repertoire will be examined both synchronically—focusing on the live performance event by Yang Mingkun, and diachronically—focusing on the tradition of the Pu School as well as Yangzhou storytelling in general. The aesthetic effects of the repertoire of Pi Wu and how Yangzhou dialect works as a means of communication in Yang’s performance will be examined.

Foley provides a new perspective to the present study on the Pu School of Rogue Pi Wu of Yangzhou storytelling. He applied a convincing theoretical framework for understanding the significance of verbal art in the The Singer of Tales in Performance by heavily drawing on two lines of thought—the Oral Theory and the ideas from the performance-oriented work coming from the school of Ethnography of
Speaking. In his work, he stressed the artistic effect of formulaic language; considered the formulas from the perspective of meaning-bearing units; characterized “performance as the enabling event” and “tradition as the enabling referent.” Foley also combined the notions of “structure,” “art” and “performance” in his framework, which turned our attention away from the immediate channel of communication to viewing the work itself, the result of encoding progresses and the subsequent basis for decoding by an audience soaked in the tradition.

The present study will focus on both the tradition of the Pu School and the present-day live performance event by Yang Mingkun. As Foley mentioned, “The single performance of a traditional oral work is both something unique, a thing in itself, and the realisation of patterns, characters, and situations that are known to the audience through prior acquaintance with other performances.” Indeed, Yang Mingkun’s performance of the repertoire of Pi Wu is a reflection of the history of Yangzhou storytelling and also a realisation of the tradition of the Pu School. Yang’s choice of the story house as the place for his performance is in careful consideration of the development of Yangzhou story house since the Qing dynasty and the performance space specifically dedicated to storytellers for the past one thousand years, and of the change of the Yangzhou storytelling audience that has occurred since the Qing dynasty. Also, the tradition of Yang’s performance is the result of the development of the repertoire and performance techniques created by Pu Lin of the Qing dynasty, and of the development of the performance language—Yangzhou dialect since the Qing dynasty.

60 Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 45.
The present study will examine how Yangzhou dialect works in the communication between Yang and his audiences. In *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, Foley pointed out that the concept of “tradition” is “extra-textual”. To substantiate his claim, he referred to the ethnography of speaking. Thus, his approach in the study of the performers was to “appeal[s] to what lies beyond any collection of linguistic integers by insisting on the value-added signification of these integers as perceived by an audience suitably equipped to accord them their special values.” Yangzhou dialect is the speaking register by Yang Mingkun in his performance of *Rogue Pi Wu*, which evokes the cultural background shared by Yang and his audiences. The dialect of Yangzhou and the cultural background shared by Yang and his audiences is a special channel allowing for the fluent communication between the two parties. Also, the Yangzhou dialect contributes considerably to the effect of Yang’s mouth acrobatics along with other means of communication such as facial expression and hand gestures. Only the audience familiar with Yangzhou dialect can decode and understand the comedic elements and effect of his mouth acrobatics.

It is necessary to examine the intertextual relationship between the three versions of performance-style text of Pi Wu. As Foley mentioned in his work *Traditional Oral Epic: the Odyssey, Beowulf and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*, “we can view the text of any performance as the intersection of two lines of development: one the historical or diachronic, the other performance-centred or synchronic.” In Foley’s research, the traditional rigid distinction between what is oral and what is written becomes less relevant. As he explained, “Text can no longer

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be separated out as something different by species from the oral tradition it records or
draws upon; the question becomes not whether but how performance and document
speak to one other.”⁶³ The repertoires performed by Pu Lin, Yu Youchun and Yang
Mingkun have been published into textbooks. Yang’s performance had also been
recorded on video. Although the live performance by Pu Lin and Yu Youchun cannot
be fully enacted through the text, the two versions of the text of Pi Wu partly reflect
Pu’s and Yu’s narrative strategies and aesthetic effects of their repertoires.

In the present study, a number of questions will be considered. How can this
study determine the aesthetic effects of the repertoire of Pi Wu performed by Yang
Mingkun, and how can the primary sources and the secondary sources be incorporated
in this study? During my fieldwork in Yangzhou, I interviewed Yang Mingkun several
times and was fortunate to have the opportunity to record down his personal comments
on the repertoire of Pi Wu and the strategies he adopted in performance. Also, I
documented the responses of the local audience during the live performances and
asked them questions related to Yang’s performance, including their comments on
Yang’s repertoire. During the fieldwork, I collected the historical records and
contemporary accounts on Yangzhou storytelling and the repertoire of Pi Wu to
present a more well-rounded study.

Mark Bender provided an effective approach to examine Jingjiang telling
scriptures and Suzhou chantefable in his works A description of Jiangjing (telling
scriptures) services in Jingjiang, China and Plum and Bamboo: China’s Suzhou
Chantefable Tradition, respectively.⁶⁴ He focused on the aesthetic effects of the

⁶³ Foley, The Singer of Tales in Performance, 79.
⁶⁴ Mark Bender, “A description of Jiangjing (telling scriptures) services in Jingjiang, China”, 101-33; Plum and
Bamboo: China’s Suzhou Chantefable Tradition.
repertoire and the elements and factors related to the performance, including the performers, audiences, venues for the performance, repertoire, roles, and technical jargon. In describing the live performances, he focused on the various means of communication involved in the event and “the strategies, principles, and goals with which Suzhou storytellers concern themselves when performing their stories.”65 In the study of the live performance, he used the “emic” terms such as storyteller’s hanghua (jargon), along with Western theoretical concepts.

However, Bender did not explore how the performer dealt with the repertoire through his strategies, principles and goals that he applied in performance. In addition, not specializing in linguistics, Bender did not consider the linguistic features of the repertoire and seek how linguistic signals work in a live performance as a means of communication. Although, he discussed the five criteria applied to evaluate the aesthetic effects of storytelling performance, detailed analysis of the live performance using these five criteria was not found.

In the present study, I will adopt Mark Bender’s approach to examine the Yangzhou storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu. I will focus on the artistic value of Yang’s repertoire by examining the relationship between the aesthetic effects of Yang’s repertoire and the core elements related to his performance, such as performance space, audiences, transmission model, performance language and acting style. In describing the live performance by Yang, I will focus on the verbal and nonverbal communication means, the strategies and goals that he applied in performance. In the course of analysis, I will use the emic thought—Yang’s comment on his repertoire and his answers to my questions on his performance as the hypothesis to examine how Yang handles the

65 Bender, *Plum and Bamboo*, 68.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

inherited repertoire of Pi Wu and considers his strategies and goals that he applied in performance, and how Yangzhou dialect works as a means of communication between Yang and his audiences.

Inspired by Bender’s ground-breaking study of Suzhou chantefable, I will examine the aesthetic effects of Yang’s live performance by referring to the five secrets (wujue 五絕) to storytellers. In the discussion concerning the aesthetic effects of storytelling, Bender provided a detailed explanation of the five secrets of storytellers, including credibility (li 理), intricate description (xi 細), novelty (qi 奇), interest (qu 趣), and flavour (wei 味). The concept of li means that the story must have certain credible elements; xi is used to increase the credibility of a story, suggesting that events must be presented in a manner allowing for slight twists in the plot and the intricate workings of a character’s mind should be revealed; qi refers to surprising twists in the plot, conflict situations and unusual characters; qu is regarded as a kind of “interest” created and sustained as the story proceeds. Wei is the result of the right combination of all the other aesthetic criteria and the proper melding of all means of communication into a pleasing whole. Yang’s repertoire of Pi Wu is called “marvellous storytelling” (qishu 奇書) in the Yangzhou storytelling industry and described as “a picture of the daily life of Yangzhou people” by contemporary scholars and audiences. Yang has acquired the fame of “Yang School of Pi Wu” (Yang pai Pi

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67 Bender, Plum and Bamboo, 51.

68 Bender, Plum and Bamboo, 51-2.

69 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Wu 楊派皮五) for his performance of Rogue Pi Wu. Thus, I will examine the aesthetic effects of Yang’s performance of Rogue Pi Wu to explore the reason for the comment on Yang’s repertoire and performance style. In the exploration, the “five secrets” to storytellers are five criteria by which to evaluate Yang’s live performance.

It is hoped that this research will fill the gaps in the performance-based analysis of the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu and deepen our understanding on the aesthetic effects of the repertoire of Pi Wu and the degree of freedom or restriction of a storyteller in dealing with the inherited repertoire; contribute to the discussion of how the interplay of oral and written literature can take place in the storyteller’s recreating process, and how linguistic signals work as a means of communication in the performance.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis deals with the Yangzhou storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu with a focus on Yang Mingkun’s performance. There are several reasons for selecting Yang’s repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu as the subject of this study. Firstly, the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu in the Pu School is the oldest surviving Yangzhou pinghua that has been performed for almost three hundred years since its creation in the Qing Qianlong era (see Chapter 1.2). Secondly, it was created and performed in the Yangzhou dialect to provide a realistic picture of the everyday life of ordinary Yangzhou people in the Qing era, particularly those from the bottom strata. The analysis of Yang’s performance speech will help us better understand the local culture and customs of Qing Yangzhou as well as in contemporary times (see Chapter 1.1). Thirdly, in the course of a few hundred years, storytellers of the Pu School preserved the original repertoire and performed in various styles. The protagonist Pi Wu and the plotline still enjoy
popularity in Yangzhou today. The Pi Wu Story House was built on Dongguan Street in present-day Yangzhou for a modern audience to enjoy the Yangzhou pinghua performance. Fourthly, I have local knowledge of Yangzhou because I was born and grew up there. I am familiar with and interested in the Yangzhou dialect, local culture and customs. My first-hand knowledge of and living experience in Yangzhou will be useful to my study of the Yangzhou pinghua repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu.

For this research project, I select the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu performed by Yang Mingkun to observe the Yangzhou pinghua and the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu of the Pu School from a diachronic perspective, and to observe the status quo of the repertoire synchronically by analysing Yang’s repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu from multiple perspectives.

This is a performance-based research project that involves anthropological, linguistic, and literary studies. The discussion as outlined in the eight chapters contribute to the understanding of the aesthetic effects of the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu performed by Yang Mingkun. Chapters 2 to 7, each chapter presents its aim at the very beginning through providing Yang’s personal thoughts on the repertoire of Pi Wu and his narrative strategy applied in performance. Also, Yang’s three roles—a tradition bearer of the Pu School, an adapter to the inherited story, a performer of the inherited repertoire as a member of the Pu school is considered in the thesis.

To conduct a comprehensive observation of the Yangzhou pinghua performance, I based my exploration on all the sources available to me. The data used in this study include those collected during my three research trips to Yangzhou from April 2015 to June 2019; historical and archival records, and contemporary scholarship on Yangzhou pinghua. During the fieldwork, I interviewed Yang Mingkun and observed his performance in person. I will also make reference to the video I recorded
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

in 2015 of Yang Mingkun’s performance of Rogue Pi Wu. In addition, I will compare these with the three versions of performance-style texts transmitted from the repertoires of Pu Lin, Yu Youchun, and Yang Mingkun Pure-Wind Dyke and Rogue Pi Wu published in 1985, 1996, and 2015 respectively. (Figure 1.5).

I will begin my study by undertaking a historical inquiry into the development of Yangzhou storytelling and the tradition of the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu of the Pu School. In Chapter 1, I introduce some aspects of the Yangzhou storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu and demonstrate how and why to conduct a research on it. Chapter 2 will explore how the term kouchuan xinshou 口傳心授 (transmitting by mouth and teaching from the heart) works as the model for the transmission of oral performance traditions of Yangzhou storytelling in general and Rogue Pi Wu. This will allow me to examine whether the repertoire of Pi Wu passed down to the present day in the Pu School still observes the traditional mode of transmission. Also, I will examine how the repertoire created by Pu Lin reflects the social context of Yangzhou in the Qing dynasty. In Chapter 3, I will focus on the performance context by taking Yang’s live performance as a point of departure to explore the performance space tradition and audience of Yangzhou pinghua from a historical view. This will serve to explain whether the performance space contributes effectively to the traditional register for Yangzhou storytelling.

Following the observation of the Pu School of Pi Wu and the performance context of Yangzhou storytelling, Chapters 4 to 7 will focus on the notions of “register” and “communication” by conducting linguistic analysis on Yang’s performance language, literary analysis on Yang’s narrative strategy, and his style of acting. I aim to examine how Yang, a member of the Pu School, deals with the tradition of the Pu School and the strategies and goals he had in performance. In the course of analysis,
Chapter 4 will first explore the textual relationship between the three versions on Pi Wu as well as the imagery of Pi Wu in Yang’s version, which will help to examine whether Yang has achieved his goal in unfolding the inherited storyline of the Pu School. In Chapter 5, I will analyse how the Yangzhou dialect is used in Yang’s speaking register in performance, either in the square mouth or the round, and highlight the value of his performance speech from a historical-linguistic point of view. In Chapter 6, I will identify how Yangzhou dialect serves as a vital communication method in Yang’s narrative and examines whether Yang has achieved his goal in the use of the traditional performance diction of the Pu School. Chapter 7 will evaluate the acting features of Yang through the five pinghua performance skills and explore how Yangzhou dialect works with other methods of communication when mouth acrobatics is applied, which can inform us on how Yang uses the traditional performance techniques of the Pu School.

In the course of analysing the Yangzhou pinghua performance of Rogue Pi Wu by Yang, this thesis examines the aesthetic effects of Yang’s repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu. It also explores the relationship between the aesthetic effects of live performance event and the factors and elements related to performance, such as performance language and storyteller’s strategy and goals used in performance.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of *Rogue Pi Wu*

**TWO**

**The Pu School of Pi Wu**

As mentioned by Yang Mingkun, the repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School is named “marvellous storytelling” within the Yangzhou storytelling circle. The reason for this term is that the repertoire reflects the traditional culture and customs of Yangzhou when it was created, and has been continued since. In this chapter, I will examine the social context surrounding the original repertoire created by Pu Lin and the transmission model in the repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School.

The collective repertoires performed by Pu Lin and his eight generations of heirs, revolve around the protagonist Pi Wu. They are derived from the *Qingfengzha* or *Pure-Wind Dyke* created by Pu Lin, which is referred to as “Pu men Pi Wu.” Pu turned his own life experience into a story. He was skilled in verbal acrobatics in performance. Thus, he acquired a high reputation from performing the story in public. Pu’s story has been passed down for eight generations and has reached Yang Mingkun, who is the ninth-generation performer. This chapter will examine the mode of oral transmission of the Yangzhou storytelling in general and the Pu School of Pi Wu in particular. I will also discuss the performance tradition of the Pu School—how the repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* was passed down from Yu Youchun to Yang Mingkun and then to Yang’s apprentices, along with the actual events and social contexts that motivated Pu’s creation. I first examine the members of the Pu School with their life experiences and performance features, which will help us to understand how Yang learnt the repertoire of Pi Wu from his master and later passed on to his apprentices.

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70 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
Finally, I examine the inspiration for Pu’s creation of the story of Pi Wu from a historical viewpoint and explore how the narrative of *Rogue Pi Wu* provides a realistic picture of the daily life of Yangzhou people in Pu’s time.

### 2.1 The Pu School of Pi Wu in History

Where did the term “Pu School of Pi Wu” come from? What is the tradition of the Pu School? How did the repertoire of Pi Wu transmit from Pu Lin to Yang Mingkun? These were the key questions I had in mind when I interviewed Yang Mingkun. In the period from 2015 to 2019, I interviewed him four times in Yangzhou. Based on Yang’s accounts and related historical and official materials collected in Yangzhou, I attempt to provide a full picture of the historical development and the performance tradition of the Pu School. I will also conceptualize the transmission model of Yangzhou storytelling and explore how *kouchuan xinshou* works.

The requirements of becoming a member of the Pu School remains controversial. Fairlee listed all nine generations of storytellers who have specialised in the story of Pi Wu since Pu Lin. She also provided details of their life experiences and individual performance features. However, not all the storytellers listed by Fairlee are officially recognized as members of the Pu School. When answering my query on the term “Pu men Pi Wu,” Yang Mingkun commented:

> The term “Pu men Pi Wu” was set and used by the government in my master’s generation. I cannot remember the exact date, but I remember the scene of filling out forms in my master’s office. The

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71 Fairlee, “Nine Generations of *Pi Wu lazi in Yangzhou Pinghua*”.
72 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
Is there any other storyteller who learnt and performed the repertoire of Pi Wu created by Pu Lin? Why were they not recognized as members of the Pu School? Yang Mingkun answered:73

In fact, members of the Pu School I mentioned before are representatives of contemporary storytellers who learnt and performed Pu’s repertoire. Their repertoires were well received by contemporary audiences and enjoyed a high reputation within the Yangzhou storytelling circle. For example, I have three apprentices now and I taught them my repertoire. However, I have no idea who will become a master storyteller of the repertoire of Pi Wu. It depends on their ability and other factors.

Scholars and pinghua storytellers have not reached a consensus among themselves on the fifth- and sixth-generation inheritors. Some scholars, including Zhang Zujian 張祖健, support the view that Hu Deting 胡德亭 (fl.1850) and Liu Deting 劉德亭 (fl.1850) are the fifth and sixth inheritors, respectively, while others argue that they should be

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73 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 June 2019.
Ding Shouting and Zhang Shaonan.⁷⁴ According to Yang Mingkun, “Yu Shaochun’s master is Zhang Shaonan,” not Liu Deting. In this study, I adopt Yang’s opinion because Yu Youchun, the son of Yu Shaochun and the master of Yang Mingkun, told Yang that Zhang Shaonan was the master of Yu Shaochun. Listed below in Table 2.1 are the known members of the Pu School and their apprentices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pu Lin 蒲琳</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chen Tiangong 陳天工</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang Bingheng 張秉衡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ji Yushan 季玉山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong Wuting 龔午亭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong Xiaoting 龔小亭 (fl.1850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ding Shouting 丁壽亭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Deting 胡德亭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang Shaonan 張少南</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu Shaochun 余少春</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu Youchun 余又春</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang Mingkun 楊明坤 (stage name: Yang Xiaochun 楊曉春)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Members of the Pu School

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⁷⁴ Zhang Zujian, “Ting Yang Mingkun shuo lazi shu, pin YangZhou pinghua liubian jingmiao” 聽楊明坤說辣子書，品揚州評話流變精妙 (“Listening to Yang Mingkun Telling the Repertoire of a Rogue and Tasting the Subtlety of the Development of the Yangzhou Pinghua”), in Song et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 42.
Based on the oral transmission model—*kouchuan xinshou* performed between master-and-apprentice, the repertoire and performance techniques of the Yangzhou storyteller are transmitted from generation to generation. *Kouchuan xinshou* is a Chinese traditional mode of cultural inheritance where knowledge is transmitted from master to apprentice or from teacher to student orally, rather than with the help of written text. It is commonly used in the process of intangible cultural heritage inheritance due to the three common traits shared with intangible cultural heritage: immateriality, orality and performativity. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Yangzhou storytelling is included in the list of China’s intangible cultural heritage under the category of traditional Chinese performing arts. These characteristics make *kouchuan xinshou* all the more essential to guarantee that storytellers’ repertoires and performance techniques can survive in the following generations. Vibeke Bør Dahl has examined the transmission mode by specifically focusing on how the Yangzhou storytelling repertoire of *The Water Margin* transmitted for seven generations in the Deng School (Deng 门 鄧門). Bør Dahl concluded that Yangzhou storytelling performance is clearly oral, and storytellers are educated through observing the mode *kouchuan xinshou* between master and disciple. Also, she discovered that the Yangzhou storytelling terminology “school,” or *men* 门 (school), *pai* 派 (school) and *jia* 家 (school), is applied to indicate the classic repertoire and a special performance style is transmitted over several generations.
According to Børådahl’s findings mentioned above, the term “Pu men Pi Wu” indicates that the repertoire of Pi Wu and performance techniques created by Pu Lin have been transmitted to Yang Mingkun on the basis of *kouchuan xinshou* between master and disciple, and thus Pu Lin is the founder of the Pu School. However, Pu Lin and Gong Wuting are regarded as co-founders of the Pu School. Although Pu Lin created the repertoire of *Pure-Wind Dyke* and his two apprentices Cheng Tiangong and Zhang Bingheng inherited the repertoire, there are no historical records for the master-apprentice relationship between Chen, Zhang, Ji Yushan, and Gong Wuting. Moreover, Ji and Gong developed the repertoire of Pi Wu into two styles. Yang Mingkun stated in the interview that his repertoire was inherited from Gong. 78 Thus, I surmise that Gong was the founder of the Pu School of Pi Wu. Why is the term “Gong men Pi Wu” not adopted? Why is Gong Wuting’s repertoire called “Gong School of Pi Wu” (*Gong jia Pi Wu* 譚家皮五)? I asked Yang these questions and he answered as follows: 79

Before talking about the implication of men or pai of Yangzhou storytelling performance, we should understand that these two terms are derived from the audience’s commentary on storytellers’ performances, and we should distinguish them from each other. Men refers to excellent repertoire and jia or pai to personal performance style. For example, I am the ninth-generation inheritor of Pu men, since my repertoire was initially created by Pu Lin. I performed in my style, and people liked it very much. Thus, my performance style is called Yang pai Pi Wu or Yang School of Pi Wu. Another example is the well-known Wang pai Shuihu of Deng men. Wang Shaotang.

78 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
79 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

the fourth-generation inheritor of Deng Guangdou 鄧光鬥 [ca.1644-ca.1912], gained his fame of Wang pai Shuihu due to his excellent performance style.

According to Yang’s explanation, the term “Pu men Pi Wu” merely indicates the modern repertoire of Pi Wu derived from Pu Lin’s creation. At the same time, “Gong jia Pi Wu” suggests that Gong developed Pu Lin’s repertoire of Pi Wu into a new style.

Gong Wuting’s repertoire has been transmitted for five generations to Yang Mingkun by through the transmission mode of kouchuan xinshou. As shown in Table 2.1, the words ting 亭, shao 少, and chun 春 are used to indicate the master-apprentice relationship between Gong Wuting, Gong Xiaoting, Ding Shouting, Hu Deting, Zhang Shaonan, Yu Shaochun, Yu Youchun and Yang Xiaochun (Yang Mingkun), suggesting that the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu performed by Yang Mingkun was derived from Gong Wuting. Gong enjoyed the fame of “Gong jia Pi Wu” and was considered the best storyteller of Rogue Pi Wu.80 Most of the storytellers during Gong’s times aspired to have Gong as their master. However, Gong often said, “I have nothing to teach you. You do not have to learn something from me. You will find the way to be a successful storyteller with your power of understanding, but not by copying others.”81 He did not wish to see budding storytellers copy his repertoire and make a living simply by imitating his performance. He hoped someone would tell the story of Pi Wu in his own style. He recognized only his son Gong Xiaoting and his

80 Taotan jiuzhu 桃潭舊主 (ca.1840-ca.1911) (the former Master of the Peach Pond), Yangzhou zhuzhici chugao 揚州竹枝詞初稿 (First Draft of the Lyrics to the Tune of Bamboo Branches in Yangzhou), in the Yangzhou quyi zhi 揚州曲藝志 (A Survey of the Oral Performance Art Performed within Yangzhou), (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1993), 283.

81 Ji Peijun 季培均, “Shijian yishu shengming” 時間藝術生命 (“Time, Arts, and Life”), in Song et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 10.
two apprentices, Hu Deting and Ding Shouting, as the inheritors of his repertoire, which was reflected in the shared character *ting* in their names. The master-apprentice relationship between Yu Shaochun, Yu Youchun and Yang Xiaochun (Yang Mingkun) is reflected in the shared character *chun* in their names.

As far as the schools of Yangzhou storytelling are concerned, storytellers do not strictly observe the *kouchuan xinshou* when transmitting their repertoire. According to Børdahl, “it was quite common for a student [of Yangzhou storytelling master] to frequent several masters and perhaps learn something from different schools.”82 This is also the case with Zhang Shaonan, the sixth-generation heir of the Pu School, who inherited the gong and drum story-singing (*luogu shu* 鐼鼓書) performance techniques from his grandfather and father and was recognized by Ding Shouting as the inheritor of the repertoire of *Pure-Wind Dyke*. Indeed, the seventh-generation heir Yu Shaochun acquired his performance experience and techniques not only from his master Zhang Shaonan but also from his master’s master Ding Shouting, as well as Chen Yueqiu 陳月秋 (fl.1850).83

As shown in the discussion above, although Pu Lin created the repertoire of Pi Wu and the term “Pu School of Pi Wu” was adopted to designate all the repertoires of Pi Wu performed by the storytellers of nine generations, there is no existing evidence showing that the present repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* performed by Yang Mingkun has been inherited from Pu. However, according to the master-apprentice relationship reflected in the shared characters in the names of the members of the Pu School, the repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* performed by Yang is derived from Gong through the oral transmission mode of *kouchuan xinshou*.

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The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

The term *kouchuan xinshou* suggests that the master orally imparts the repertoire to his apprentice with the related performance techniques of the repertoire and the apprentice accepts what his master imparts to him with his own understanding. This traditional mode of oral transmission assures that the master’s performance tradition can be successfully passed down to the apprentice. The master teaches his apprentice by telling and performing a passage from a story as a lesson for a day. The apprentice attempts to retell the passage to his master on the next day; this is called “return the text” (*huanshu* 還書). When listening to the apprentice retelling a passage, the master will correct the apprentice’s wording, action and look by referring to his own performance tradition. As a result, the apprentice’s performance tradition will not deviate from his master’s. According to Børdahl, member of the Wang School performed the routine *huanshu* when learning the repertoire of *The Water Margin* from his master.84 Ma Wei 馬偉, the apprentice of renowned storyteller Hui Zhaolong 惠兆龍 (c.a.1942-2011) said, “During the process of *huanshu*, he [Hui Zhaolong] paid close attention to my recitation. He corrected my narrative, my gesture and motion, my look, and my wording.”85

What is the performance tradition of the Pu School? Has it survived through *kouchuan xinshou* and *huanshu*? When answering my question concerning the performance tradition of the Pu School, Yang Mingkun said:86

Indeed, there were two styles of performance derived from Pu Lin’s performance of *Pure-Wind Dyke*: They are the upper river (*shanghe*

84 Børdahl, “A Case Study of the Yangzhou Pinghua Tradition”, 17.
86 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

As there are no existing materials concerning these two branches except for Yang’s account, we cannot learn more on this subject.87

At the core of the performance tradition created by Pu Lin are the Yangzhou dialect, mimicry and joking. From the very beginning, the storytellers of the Pu School narrated the story of Pi Wu in the Yangzhou dialect. Pu Lin created the story *Pure-Wind Dyke* and performed in the Yangzhou dialect of the Qianlong era.88 Two contemporary scholars, Li Dou and Jin Zhaoyan 金兆燕 (1719-1791), noted that Pu was good at imitating minor characters (*xiao renwu 小人物*) of different industries and that he was a master of mimicry and jokes.89 Pu lived in poverty as a boy and begged for a living. Later, he met an elderly woman who taught him gambling tricks; by applying these tricks, Pu became rich. He rented a house in Wuditai 無敵台 and became a neighbour to a woman who lived with her nephew. The woman’s nephew practised reciting stories everyday at home and made a living through storytelling. Pu listened to his story many times and became interested in performing storytelling. Pu was illiterate and did not know any Chinese literary works because he had not received any school education. Therefore, he asked someone to read books to him. Fortunately, he had a good memory; once he had heard the stories, he was able to remember them.

87 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 204.
88 Zhang, “Ting Yang Mingkun shuo lazi shu, pin Yangzhou pinghua liubian jingmiao”, in Song et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji*, 41.
89 Li, *Yangzhou huafang lu*, 205; see also Dong “Lun Qingfengzha de yanbian he yiyi”, 107.
He did not like to imitate others’ repertoires. Thus, he created a setting for his *Pure-Wind Dyke* by drawing on a vernacular story titled “San xianshen Bao Longtu duanyuan” (三現身包龍圖斷冤, “Judge Bao Solves the Case of Three Apparitions”) in the *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (*Stories to Caution the World*). Pu Lin’s disciples Zhang Bingheng and Chen Tiangong also recited the story of Pi Wu in the Yangzhou dialect. Zhang and Chen continued to perform Pu’s story during the Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1760-1820) era. In the *Chuyuan xiaoxia lu* 柴園銷夏録 (*Reminiscences of the Chuyuan Garden in Summer*) by Guo Lin 郭麐 (1767-1831), there is an account of the performance language applied in telling the story of Pi Wu in Qing Hangzhou:

A Yangzhou storyteller good at telling the story of Pi Wu was going to perform in Hangzhou, and many people went to venue early before his performance. Later, when the storyteller spoke in pure Yangzhou dialect, the audience was very puzzled. They could not enjoy the performance but had to stay there. The storyteller and his fans did not share the same spoken language.

According to Guo Lin, the Qing storyteller mentioned in the account above might be either Pu Lin, Zhang Bingheng or Chen Tiangong. As noted in the above account, the Qing storyteller performed using the Yangzhou dialect even in Hangzhou. People from

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90 Li, *Yangzhou huafang lu*, 205.
91 Wang et al. (eds.), *Qingfengzha*, 2; Liu, “Jianlun Qingfengzha”, 16-8; Wan, “Regional Fiction Clear Wind Sluice (Qingfengzha 1819)”, 192-3; “Local Fiction of the Yangzhou Region: Qingfengzha”, 177-204.
Yangzhou and Hangzhou could not understand each other if they spoke to each other in their own dialect, so his Hangzhou audiences could not understand the performance.

As mentioned above, kouchuan xinshou suggests a dynamic relationship between master and apprentice by emphasizing the importance of initiative and innovative ability of the apprentice in receiving and inheriting his master’s performance tradition. The apprentice differs from his master in many ways and they do not share the same life experience. Naturally, the apprentice has a different understanding on his master’s repertoire and there is a high likelihood that he will create a refreshing version. The master will anticipate if his apprentice’s changed repertoire is a failure or success. For example, Yu Youchun declined to take Yang Mingkun as his apprentice at first since he thought Yang would change his repertoire too drastically.93

However, the newly adapted repertoires of Pi Wu performed by Ji Yushan and Gong Wuting made Pu Ling’s repertoire more appealing to the contemporary audience. There is no historical record for the performance language by Ji, so it still requires further study to determine whether Ji performed in the Yangzhou dialect. Gong might adapt his phonetic realisations in his performance to the mandarin of his time and thus did not perform in the Yangzhou dialect as what Pu Lin did in his performance. Differing from Pu Lin, Gong was famous for his comical narration on Pi Wu and innovative ability in refreshing the repertoire but not for performing mimicry and jokes as what Pu Lin did in performance; Ji was famous for the fool language that he used in performance. Ji and Gong performed Pure-Wind Dyke during the periods of Daoguang 道光 (1782-1850), Xianfeng 咸豐 (1831-1861), Tongzhi, and Guangxu 光

The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

緒 (1871-1908). Ji performed in this style with much improvisation, sarcasm, and foul language. Local Yangzhou inhabitants said that Ji was the representative of the martial style of Pi Wu (wu lazi 武辣子). When I mentioned wu lazi to Yang Mingkun, he responded:

In the so-called martial style performance, storytellers often used bawdy language. Zhong Songyan 仲松岩 performed in this style in my master’s generation. I am not sure if he is still alive today, as he would be in his nineties if he is. In general, inhabitants of Yangzhou preferred the performance in the gentle style of Pi Wu (wen lazi 文辣子). My performance style is the gentle one.

According to Yang Mingkun, Gong Wuting created a new style that was different from wu lazi, and Yang performed in the new style.

Gong Wuting was very interested in fiction in his teenage years and later made a living by performing storytelling. He was an eminent creative storyteller. Among the contemporary repertoires, he showed a particular preference for Pure-Wind Dyke. Thus, he performed the repertoire during the Xianfeng, Tongzhi and Guangxu eras. Gong left Yangzhou for Taizhou and continued to tell the story of Pi Wu during the reign of Xianfeng when the rebels of the Heavenly Kingdom occupied Yangzhou city. After the war, Gong returned to Yangzhou to continue his performance of the story of Pi Wu. Although Gong was not the creator of the story of Pi Wu, he performed it successfully through a steady flow of inspiration recreated over thirty years. He shaped

95 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
96 Dong, “Shijing xiaoshuo de zhongyao daibiao”, 195.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

developed the image of Pi Wu by expanding on the character’s comical thoughts and behaviours. Thus, Gong’s repertoire and performance style achieved a high reputation and became known as the Gong School of Pi Wu. “Gong Wuting lived in Yangzhou for thirty years, and he performed Pure-Wind Dyke in his special style every year.”97 His performance was very popular in Qing Yangzhou, which finds expression in a Yangzhou folk saying “You must have your meals without interruption so as not to miss out on Gong’s performance” (Yaoting Gong Wuting, chifan modating 要聼龔午亭，吃飯莫打停). Zhu Huang 朱黃 (ca.1875-ca.1908) gave an account of Gong’s high reputation in his Gong Wuting zhuan 龔午亭傳 (Biography of Gong Wuting): “At that time, anyone who went to Yangzhou without listening to the story narrated by Gong Wuting would have been laughed at when they returned home.”98 It is likely that Gong had adapted his phonetic realisations in his performance to the mandarin of his time; otherwise, provincial folk would have been unable to understand his performance.

A storyteller’s fresh understanding of the repertoire that his master imparted to him will decide the way he would revise his master’s repertoire. He may draw on his personal life experience, his knowledge from books or through his imagination. In this circumstance, the storyteller inevitably borrows heavily from the episodes from well-known novels in refreshing his repertoire. When his revised repertoire is well received by the contemporary audience, the storyteller will gain fame. Indeed, the two different styles of oral performance by Ji and Gong represent the two types of understanding of the image of Pi Wu: a martial Pi Wu in Ji’s repertoire, and a comic one in Gong’s. Gong’s gentle style has been popular since its creation. By contrast, Ji’s martial style

98 Zhu Huang, Gong Wuting zhuan, in Dong Yushu 董玉書 (1869-1952) (eds.), Wucheng huaijiulu bulu 蕪城懷舊録·補録 (A Sequel to the Reminiscences from the Wu City), (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2002), 194.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

is rarely mentioned in historical documents. However, the significant contribution made by Ji to the story of Pi Wu should not be ignored. Yangzhou storytelling enjoyed a boom time in the Qing dynasty when new storytellers with their repertoires emerged rapidly. Each with his own style, Ji’s martial Pi Wu and Gong’s gentle Pi Wu, was able to satisfy audiences from various social classes, including the educated elite and court officials, the illiterate, even rogues and peddlers. 99 Thus, their performance styles were named *wu lazi* and *wen lazi* respectively by their audiences. According to Yang, “The so-called *wu lazi* and *wen lazi* were named by audiences. The storyteller himself did not give their performance any such title.”100

As mentioned before, the master -and -apprentice relationship between Gong Wuting, Ding Shouting, Zhang Shaonan, Yu Shaochun, Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun is apparent. Moreover, Yang Mingkun mentioned that Yu Youchun, Yu Shaochun and himself were educated through the traditional transmission mode *kouchuan xinshou*. 101 Thus, Gong’s performance tradition was well preserved throughout the five generations.

The storyteller’s subjective consciousness plays a more crucial role than the knowledge and skills that his master taught him in his performance career. Over the past three centuries, there have been at least twenty-four storytellers performing the story of Pi Wu. 102 Among them only nine storytellers are included in the Pu School. To a large extent, their abilities to perform and refresh their repertoires will determine whether they are accepted as a member of the Pu School. Gong Wuting educated Ding

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100 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
101 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 June 2019.
102 Fairlee, “Nine Generations of Pi Wu lazi in Yangzhou Pinghua”.
Shouting along with Gong Xiaoting, Zhang Jiesan 張捷三 (c.1850) and Hu Deting as the inheritors of his repertoire. Gong Xiaoting was Gong Wuting’s apprentice and son, however he is not recognized as a member of the Pu School and there is little information about him. Also, we hear nothing of Hu Deting. As mentioned before, Gong Wuting himself focused on the storyteller’s power of understanding and innovative ability and thus refused to accept anyone as his disciple. Zhang Jiesan was reputed as “little Gong Wuting” due to his fantastic mimicry of Gong Wuting’s voice, gestures and words, but did not refresh his repertoire. As a result, Zhang was not allowed to share with his master the same character 亭 in his stage name. We can imagine that Ding Shouting must have had a good sense of understanding and innovation ability. Otherwise his repertoire would not have been able to meet Gong Wuting’s strict requirements. Later, Ding became the master of Zhang Shaonan.

Zhang Shaonan’s performance language is possibly a mixed version of the Yangzhou dialect and the Hai’an dialect. He was a very popular storyteller in the Lixiahe 里下河 area, including Gaoyou, Zhenjiang, Taizhou 泰州, and Baoying. He was very experienced in performing gong and drum story-singing in the Hai’an 海安 dialect. In his performance style, Zhang spoke smoothly when telling the story of Pi Wu, following the phonological system of the Jiang-Huai dialect group. The Jiang-Huai dialect group consists of three dialect sub-groups, including Hongchao 洪巢, Tairu 泰如 and Huangxiao 黃孝. The Yangzhou dialect belongs to the Hongchao subgroup and Hai’an 海安 of the Tairu. Zhang was a native Hai’an dialect speaker. When

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104 Lixiahe is in the central part of Jiangsu province. It starts from the Inner Canal, directing eastward to the Chuanchang 串場 River; it starts from the Northern Jiangsu Irrigation Canal, directing southward to the Yangzhou canal.
performing the story of Pi Wu, he may have adapted his native pronunciation to that of the Yangzhou dialect. His pronunciation is a mixed version of Yangzhou dialect and the Hai’an dialect. At any rate, his pronunciation follows the phonological system of the Jiang-Huai dialect group. Thus, his performance attracted many people from the Jiang-Huai area.

Yu Youchun, the son of Yu Shaochun, and Yang Mingkun share their performance traditions with Pu Lin and Gong Wuting. They perform the story of Pi Wu in the Yangzhou dialect; they are good at imitating Pi Wu, and perform in wen style. According to the recorded live oral performance by Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun, both adopted Yangzhou dialect in their performances. “My master was good at imitating Pi Wu through facial expression and talking, and he said I was better than him,” Yang said proudly, “My master’s style and mine are the comic style inherited from Gong Wuting.”

We know little about Yu Shaochun. Although Yu Youchun inherited the repertoire of Pi Wu from his father Yu Shaochun, we cannot determine whether Yu Shaochun’s performance is the same as Yu Youchun in performance tradition as the former repertoire was not recorded down in text or tape-/video-recording. Yu Shaochun was also born in Hai’an and became Zhang Shaonan’s apprentice at the age of eighteen. He kept the repertoire of Pi Wu free from foul language. In addition, his performance enjoyed popularity in the Lixiahe area. His son Yu Youchun inherited his repertoire together with his performance techniques, and thereafter transmitted them to his apprentice Yang Mingkun.

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105 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
Yu Youchun received his education at an old-style private school as well as a modern-style primary school. In contrast to other contemporary storytellers, he was literate. He was a smart learner and quickly mastered the repertoire. He performed by himself in public at the young age of twelve. He began his performance career by performing in both the rural and urban areas of Hai’an and Dongtai 東台. When his performance skills improved, he performed more often in big towns and cities. When he arrived in Zhenjiang, he attended a charity storytelling show. In the show, he performed *Pure-Wind Dyke* with well-known masters Kang Youhua 康又華 (1898-1951) and Lang Zhaoxian 郎照先 (fl.1920). His performance received high praise at the show, so he decided to live and perform in the cities of Zhenjiang and Yangzhou. In 1960, he became a full member of Yangzhou Oral Performing Art Company 揚州曲藝團. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), he could not continue to perform, and he gave up his plan to publish the repertoire of *Pure-Wind Dyke*. He was assigned to be a library assistant at a factory in the rural area of Yangzhou. In 1978, the Yangzhou Broadcasting Station was entrusted by the Shanghai Film Studio to record Yu’s oral performance of *Pure-Wind Dyke*. He went back to work at Yangzhou Oral Performing Art Company in the following year. In 1985, his repertoire was transcribed into text and published under the title “Pi Wu lazi”.

So far, I have discussed all the major members of the Pu School, describing their individual performance features. Also, I have conceptualized the model where the oral tradition of the Pu School of Pi Wu and Yangzhou storytelling in general was transmitted.

As Yang Mingkun is widely accepted as the only living heir of the repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School, I will focus on Yang Mingkun in the following section, exploring how he inherited the repertoire of Pi Wu from his master Yu Youchun. I will
also discuss how Yang adapted his master’s repertoire innovatively without deviating greatly from his master’s performance tradition, and how he taught his apprentices. This study will be based mainly on my interviews with Yang Mingkun during my fieldwork in Yangzhou and the narrative of *Rogue Pí Wu* recited by Yang and Yu Youchun.

The first question that came to my mind was whether the Pu School members have prompt book (*jiaoben* 腳本) to study during their apprenticeship? To this question, Yang Mingkun replied: “I do not have the so-called scripts, nor did my master.” “We learnt repertoire by observation and memory.”106 He also shared his performance experience about how he had learnt the repertoire from Yu Youchun. In 1975, Yang Mingkun won a prize in an unofficial performance competition and was known to the public. His talent for creating and performing Yangzhou *pinghua* stories in the competition impressed the then Director Yangzhou Municipal Bureau of Culture; considering his talent, the director made an exception to recruit Yang as a full member of the Yangzhou Oral Performing Art Company. Before that, few people in the Yangzhou storytelling circles had known or noticed him. When working in the company, he respected both renowned *pinghua* storytellers, Wang Shaotang and Yu Youchun. He voiced his desire to be Yu’s apprentice, but Yu refused his request and said, “I prefer to paint on a blank sheet of paper than alter a piece of drawing.” When talking about his master Yu Youchun, Yang revealed his experience of formally acknowledging Yu as his master (*baishi* 拜師). His explanation is as follows:107

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106 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
107 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
I worked as a professional storyteller together with my master Yu before I became his apprentice. When I voiced my desire to be his apprentice, Yu refused my request. [...] You know, I loved the repertoire of Pi Wu performed by Yu. So I asked to watch his performance and learn his repertoire without his permission. Interestingly, Yu refused to teach me in words but taught me in action. Before telling the story of Pi Wu, he needed to glance at the audiences and check me out. During the performance, he would stare at me for a while when applying his specific performance techniques. Thus, the day when I became his apprentice formally, I learnt all his repertoire along with his performance techniques.

As shown above, Yang has inherited the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu from Master Yu by observing Yu’s living performances.

By observing and memorizing his master’s performance, Yang Mingkun has learnt the core elements of his master’s narration. This includes the main plot that comprises thirteen episodes, the features of the character Pi Wu, and the storyline of the legal case (see Chapter 4.1). Like Yu, Yang performs in Yangzhou dialect (see Chapters 5.1, 5.2 and 7.1), learning and enriching the performance skills employed by Yu (see Chapter 7.2). In addition, he has learnt and preserved the narration with Qing Yangzhou city as the backdrop. The tradition of the daily life of Yangzhou people in the past and present is well presented in Yang’s narrative and thus his repertoire sounds li or credible. For example, the traditions of “eat wine” (chijiu 吃酒) and “drink wine” (hejiu 喝酒) in Yangzhou are different. Chijiu means an expensive dish served to
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

match the wine, while *hejiu* refers to a simple dish or no dish is served. An example of the usage of *chijiu* is as follows: 108

The woman warms a pot of wine, takes a wine cup, a pair of chopsticks, and a small plate with soy sauce to a young man. Also, she serves a big bowl of pig trotter soup to him […]. The young man sits down on a chair to eat wine (*chijiu*).

As pig trotter soup is not frequently served as a cuisine in Qing Yangzhou, the word *chijiu* is adopted here. *Hejiu* is more commonly used among the Yangzhou people, for example: 109

Mama Zhang says to Pi Wu, “You want to drink wine (*hejiu*)! Why not say it directly? You said ‘open a dyke’ (*kai ba*) 開壩, who knows what you want?” […] Later, Mama Zhang serves sliced bean-curd to Pi Wu with his drink.

As demonstrated above, Mama Zhang uses the word *hejiu*, and by saying this, she means to offer Pi Wu only sliced bean-curd with his drink.

The tradition of playing games was very popular in Yangzhou in Qing times, which is also reflected in Yang’s performance of Rogue Pi Wu. The game may be played by asking riddles, connecting idioms, composing couplets or verses, telling stories or jokes, and so on. The riddle, for example, does not have a fixed pattern in terms of the number of syllables per line, the number of lines and other rhetorical

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108 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 527-28.
109 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 38.
devices, but usually has a rhyming pattern. Below is an example of a drinker’s wage game riddle in the story:\textsuperscript{110}

Wang Er says, “It is boring to drink without playing drinking games, so let us say something interesting.”

Bag Nose says, “Good idea! Give us an example, please, my brother.”

Wang Er is happy and says, “We give a speech in this form:

‘Something that flies in the sky;
Something that grows up in the field,
an ancient person stands there, holding an antique book and reads aloud two lines of the book.’

Remember, every sentence should end in the same rhyme.”

One of them says,

“Red-crowned crane (\textit{he} 鶴) flies in the sky;
loquat (\textit{pipa} 枇杷) tree grows up in the field,
Dong Zhuo 董卓 [d.192] stands there, holding the \textit{Daxue} 大學 (\textit{The Great Learning}) in hand. He reads aloud two lines of the book, ‘Gentlemen respect all the respectable people; the ordinary people enjoy (\textit{le} 樂) the happiness they have.’”\textsuperscript{111}

In reciting the riddle shown above, Yang Mingkun reads \textit{he} 鶴, \textit{pa} 枇, \textit{zhuo} 卓, \textit{xue} 學, and \textit{le} 樂 as [xaʔ], [pʰaʔ], [tsuaʔ], [ciaʔ], and [laʔ], respectively. All the six syllables share a rhyme [aʔ]. Another example involving rhyming pattern is the celebration

\textsuperscript{110} Yin et al. (eds.), \textit{Pi Wu lazi}, 155.

\textsuperscript{111} There are no such two lines in \textit{The Great Learning}.
speech called *han eryizi* 喊二ー子 in the local language. An example of such a speech is given below.\(^{112}\)

One man says, “Guys, please give a celebration-speech to Pi Wu and his bride.”

Wang Er says, “I will do it! Pi Wu, listen to me, please!

*Tajin xingren fang*, 踏進新人房,

*Simian liangtangtang*, 四面亮堂.

*lainian sheng guizi*, 來年生貴子,

*bizhong Zhuangyuanlang.* 必中狀元郎.”

Walking into the wedding room, the light is bright on all sides. A baby will be born next year, and he will surely emerge first in the imperial civil service examination when he grows up.

As shown above, *han eryizi* is a type of speech given to celebrate a wedding ceremony; the rhyme occurs at the last syllable—*ang* [aŋ] marked in bold for every line except the third one.

Yang’s good memory and his observation of Yu’s performance do not fully explain how the repertoire of Pi Wu was transmitted from Yu to Yang. The storytellers might have some secret documents or personal notes to the narrative that are difficult to memorise, as Børdahl had discussed in her case study.\(^ {113}\) However, I surmise that Yang’s ability to re-create is a key factor in inheriting the repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* from Yu. Yang’s view on what it takes to be a successful storyteller indicates that he values the creative ability of professional storytellers.\(^ {114}\)

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\(^{112}\) Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 200.

\(^{113}\) Børdahl, “A Case Study of the *Yangzhou Pinghua* Tradition”, 17.

\(^{114}\) Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
An oral performing arts performer who is merely imitative of others but unable to use his brain well is not a good performer. If he merely has speaking ability but no good writing ability, he is not a good performer. If he merely recites stories but does not portray the characters in stories, he is not a good performer.

As suggested by Yang, a good storyteller must have good creative ability, including making good use of his brain, and having the ability to write and read and to portray the characters well. He furtherly explained that a good storyteller should have the ability to create stories and characters by drawing on his personal experience and knowledge of Chinese literature. “Briefly speaking, creative ability is very important to us storytellers,” he added.

Indeed, in learning the repertoire of Pi Wu from his master, Yang makes good use of his creative ability. When learning the repertoire of Pi Wu from Yu, Yang was not Yu’s apprentice, so he did not do the routine huanshu and could not receive Yu’s guidance directly. In this scenario, Yang had to make use of innovative tradition to recite the story of Pi Wu. To cater to the contemporary audiences, Yang Mingkun uses many more colloquial words than Yu and makes the Yangzhou dialect a vital comedic element in his comical presentation, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. He also rearranges and enriches the narrative inherited from Yu by shaping Pi Wu as a good man by nature—a somewhat new image more readily received by contemporary audiences (see Chapters 4.2 and 4.3). His unique understanding of the story and careful observation of the daily life of contemporary Yangzhou people have led to a newly adapted narrative of Pi Wu.

Yang Mingkun recreates the repertoire of Pi Wu performed by Yu, which is well received by the audience. For example, he replaces a tongue twister called tou’er
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

ci 頭兒詞 (literally, “words suffixed with [the bound morpheme] ‘tou’”) with another called zuidaluo shedagu 嘴打鑼舌打鼓 (literally “Beat the gong by mouth and the drum by tongue”) in the same episode because the latter sounds more familiar to contemporary audiences than the former. In the story, zuidaluo shedagu is created by Xiao Xizi on the way to Pi Wu’s house:

On the way to Pi Wu’s mansion, Xiao Xizi speaks to himself for fun,

“噹個啷噹, 噹個啷噹, 噹個啷噹噹. 東頭來了個小瞎子, 西頭來了個小癩子; 小瞎子手上抓住個臭襪子, 一手拎住個鞋拔子; 小癩子一手抓住個野鴨子, 還一手抓住個鞋拔子; 瞎子碰癩子還癩子碰瞎子, 瞎子打癩子還癩子打瞎子, 甩起來一刷子還兜起來一拔子, 打掉了臭襪子還打飛了野鴨子, 瞎子打癩子. 一刻兒功夫到公館門口了”。

Dangge langdang, dangge langdang, dangge langdangdang (onomatopoeia, sound of tapping the gong). A blind young man comes from the east with a pair of socks in one hand and a shoehorn in the other; a young rogue comes from the west with a wild duck in one hand and a shoehorn in the other. The blind man runs into the rogue. The rogue runs into the blind man at the same time. The blind man hits the rogue. The rogue hits the blind man, too. Hitting each other with a brush and then with a shoehorn, they lose the socks and the wild duck. The blind man hits the rogue. I have arrived! This is Pi Wu’s mansion. Very fast.”

115 Tou’er ci and Zuidaluo shidagu used to refer to casual conversations between ordinary Yangzhou people. Now, zuidaluo shedagu has become a slang to refer to people talking nonsense.

116 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 684.
Xiao Xizi is an illiterate servant who has never received any formal education. His speech is nonsense but rhythmic and comical. First, each line ends with zi 子, as in xiao xiazi 小瞎子 (a young blind man), xiao laizi 小赖子 (a young rogue), yazi 鸭子 (duck), and wazi 袜子 (sock). Second, he starts his tongue-twister with a series of onomatopoeia, “dangge langdang dangge langdang dangge langdang dang,” which contributes to the rhythmic sense of the speech. Finally, the story in the tongue-twister sounds ridiculous, but also reflects that the speaker is in a happy mood. The tou’er ci narrated by his master Yu Youchun is replaced by Yang with zuidaluo shedagu. Each line of tou’er ci ends with the syllable tou. Tou’er ci is also created by Xiao Xizi in the version by Yu:117

Xiao Xizi used tou’er ci at his own will:

“有一個姑娘起早頭, 拿了掃把頭, 大門頭掃到房門頭, 又掃到書桌頭, 放下掃帚頭, 洗臉梳油頭, 梳過了頭, 吃了三個大饅頭, 提起籃子上街頭, 迎面撞到個大癩頭; 大癩頭擔了一擔蘿蔔頭, 大姑娘向他稱了二斤蘿蔔頭, 回家坐到廚房鍋灶頭, 拿了硭子頭, 點著草把頭, 燒了節草把頭, 煮熟了二斤蘿蔔頭, 她走進到灶面頭, 揭開鍋蓋頭來拿蘿蔔頭.”

A girl gets up very early! She picks up a besom, sweeps the floor from the gate of the house to the door of the room, and to the side of the desk. She puts down the besom, and washes her face and combs her hair. After combing her hair, she eats up three big steamed rice cakes, and then she picks up a basket on her way out. She runs into a person with a peanut-head. The person is carrying a

117 Wang et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 370.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

load of radish. The girl buys two jin \(^{118}\) of radish and goes back to the kitchen. She picks a piece of paper-roll, fires a bunch of hay, and throws them into the stove. After burning up a few bunches of hay, the radish is boiled. She goes to the kitchen, removes the pot cover and scoops out the cooked radish.

All the sentences in the above tongue-twister contain a word ending with the morpheme -tou 頭, as shown in saoba tou 扫把頭 (besom), luobo tou 萝卜頭 (radish), and mangzi tou 磕子頭 (a piece of paper-roll for lighting). The scene from daily life portrayed in the passage by Yu is not familiar to the audience and the items such as saoba tou and mangzi tou mentioned in the passage rarely appear in the daily lives of contemporary audiences. By contrast, xiao xazi, xiao laizi, ye yazi and wazi appear in the zuidaluo shedagu, which are commonly used words in the current lexicon of the Yangzhou dialect. In the year 2012 alone, Yang’s performances attracted more than 390,000 people.\(^{119}\)

Yang borrows his expression skills from other genres of performing arts in an effort to improve the repertoire of Pi Wu that he has inherited from his master. His views on storytelling provides a deeper insight on our understanding of the performing arts. He stated his views as follows:\(^{120}\)

Storytelling is not an isolated genre of performing arts. To perform an individual piece of work with good taste for art, storytellers need to borrow acting skills and artistic expressions from literature and other genres of arts, such as singing and dancing, and fine arts

\(^{118}\) Jin, a unit of weight (approximately half a kilogram).

\(^{119}\) Ji, “Shijian yishu shengming”, in Song et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 7.

\(^{120}\) Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

including painting and calligraphy, poetry, Kun opera (kunqu昆曲), drama, fast-tale and so forth.

In the repertoire of Pi Wu, more than ten genres of oral performing arts are adopted by Yang, namely, xiaochang 小唱 (singing in dialect), huaishu 淮書 (Jiang-Huai storytelling), daoqing 道情 (ballad singsing), qiaoxiaopanzi changxiaodiao 敲小盤子唱小調 (singing popular songs and beating small plates), dagushu 大鼓書 (big drum storytelling), gebixi 隔壁戲 (a form of comedy sketch prevalent in Qing dynasty Hangzhou—literally “next-door opera”), jingju 京劇 (Beijing opera), yangju 揚劇 (Yangzhou opera), and so forth.

Yang Mingkun performs more than the above-mentioned genres. For example, in accordance with the plot of Rogue Pi Wu, Yang plays Hou’er shu 猴兒書 (Story of the Monkey), sings folk songs and performs puppet shows. Hou’er shu refers to the Yangzhou storytelling repertoire of the Journey to the West; hou’er refers to Sun Wukong or the Monkey King, who plays a critical role in the story. The description of Hou’er shu in the story is as follows: 121

A young storyteller taps a bamboo tube while jumping, qibeng 漆畚 (onomatopoeia: sound of tapping the bamboo tube) qibeng qibengbeng. The storyteller looks like a monkey indeed. His repertoire is the Journey to the West. He says, “Talk of Tang Sanzang 唐三藏, speaking of Tang Sanzang, I will tell you a story of Tang Sanzang. He rides a white dragon horse, Zhu Bajie leads

121 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 202.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

the horse’s bridle, Monk Sha burdens the load, and the Monkey
King follows them with a golden cudgel in hand.”

As demonstrated above, a young storyteller imitates the famous Monkey King vividly when telling the story of the *Journey to the West*. Yang mimics the younger storyteller performing *hou’er shu* when reciting the story of Pi Wu.

In the story, a young couple sings the Yangzhou folk songs “Zhuo poniang zuo dagua” 捶婆娘做大褂 (“Clumsy Wife Sews a Big Coat”) and “Yangliu qing” 楊柳青 (“Willows are Green”) at the temple fair to earn money. The description of the performance in Yangzhou dialect is as follows:

A man walks around and finds more and more people gathering around him, he then shouts to them, “We performers depend on parents at home and on friends when we are far away from home. We need to make a living by performing! If one of you gives us two hundred cash (wen 文), we will sing for you. We will not charge until we have finished the performance. Otherwise, we cannot perform.”

Yang also sings these two songs in the Yangzhou dialect when reciting the passage above.

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122 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 381.
123 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 380.
124 *Wen* is a standard unit of currency made of copper and lead and minted (usually) by imperial decree. The value of the coins varied greatly over time, but their weight, size, and shape remained virtually the same for centuries. Approximately 1,000 *wen* per *liang*. *Liang* is a unit of weight for silver used in monetary transactions, roughly equivalent to one ounce of silver. The value of the *liang* varied greatly over the Qing dynasty. In the *Peaking Gazette*, the *liang* is invariably translated as tael.
The puppet show is particularly entertaining compared with other genres of local performing arts of Yangzhou, and its lovely puppets have a large fan base. There is a vivid description of a puppet show in the story.125

There are lots of people watching the puppet show. Some of them get squashed and almost cry for help. […] A boy asks an old man, “You always come here to watch the show, so can you please tell me who is who among the many characters? Is he a Daoist priest? What are they singing? Elderly uncle, please tell us what the show is about.”

The old man says, “Oh … oh … this is … uh … this is a …”

The boy says, “Don’t say ‘this’ or ‘that’! What is the story about? You told me you had watched this show many times, but I do not think you know much about it.”

Clearly, the old man has watched the puppet show many times. However, he cannot tell the boy anything about the story presented in the show. He is only interested in the puppets, not the story. When performing the dialogue between the old man and the young boy, Yang not only imitates how the two people talk but also explains what the puppet show is to his audience as he performs it.

Labour and diligence are crucial traits for a good storyteller. Yang Mingkun always makes good preparation for every performance ever since he began his performance career. “When making preparations,” he said, “I usually perform facing a mirror. At this time, I will play three different roles: a performer, a listener, and a judge.”126 As the performer, Yang Mingkun repeatedly revises and improves his

125 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 382.
126 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

repertoire, hoping to move the listener who may laugh, cry, or become emotional. Playing the harsh judge is the most important role of the three, according to Yang, as he would judge his performer’s role without mercy. The pickier he is as a judge, the better he will perform in future. When I asked him what it took to become a qualified inheritor of the Pu School, Yang replied:127

In listening to my storytelling, audiences can gain historical knowledge of Yangzhou city and the local tradition of daily life. They may find my story comical, but at the same time, they may gain a few insights from my narrative and comments. Also, I need to take the audiences’ requisition into account in performing. Otherwise, I do not think I am a good storyteller.

Most importantly, he is always ready to take on board feedback from his audiences in the course of recreating the story of Pi Wu.

In 2013, Yang Mingkun recruited three apprentices and taught them his repertoire of Pi Wu. How does Yang determine whether the apprentice is the suitable candidate to become the heir of the repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School? Yang answered:128

To be my apprentice, they must be a fan of Yangzhou storytelling. I mean they should be interested in Yangzhou storytelling performance. Also, I will find out whether they can speak clearly and have a clear voice. However, if they do not have a clear voice, I will teach them the way to speak clearly and loudly.

127 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
128 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 June 2019.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Are all the three apprentices considered heirs of the Pu School? How did Yang teach them? Did Yang teach them by observing the traditional rule “orally transmitting and teaching from the heart?” Did his apprentices perform the routine *huanshu*? Yang explained how he taught his apprentices:129

I think they are all the heirs of my repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School of the tenth generation. Yes, I taught them through the traditional transmission model *kouchuan xinshou*. Normally, I taught them thirty minutes as a daily lesson where I performed and informed them of the key performance techniques. Most of the time, they observed my performance and memorize my narrative. Sometimes they recorded my teaching process on the phone to review and memorize what I said. On the next day, they would perform what I taught them the day before for around twenty-five minutes. I listened to them again and again while correcting their tempo, intonation and logical stress until they met my requirements, i.e. “One understands it the moment they hear it” (*ru er ji dong* 入耳即懂).

Who is the best among the three apprentices? Yang said he would not comment on this because nobody can say for sure who will be the favourite among the audience, and who can eventually become the tenth-generation inheritor of the Pu School twenty years later. It will depend on their performance and as the proverb goes: “The master leads the way, and the cultivation depends on the disciple himself” (*Shifu ling jin men, xiuxing zai ge ren* 師父領進門，修行在各人).130

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129 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 June 2019.
130 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 June 2019.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

*Kouchuan xinshou* is the main transmission mode in Yangzhou storytelling. The life and performance experiences of the storytellers in the Pu School determine their personal performance features. Yang is a well-established storyteller, and his performance is held in high regard by his audience as “Yang School of Pi Wu”. His good memory and creativity have greatly contributed to his successful inheritance of the repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School.

### 2.2 Sources of Inspiration for Pu Lin’s Creation

The repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* of the Pu School is widely described as “a picture of the daily life of Yangzhou people.” In this section, I will examine the sources of inspiration for Pu Lin’s creation and explore why the story of Pi Wu presents a real-life picture of the daily life of ordinary Yangzhou people.

According to Liu Chongyi and Margaret Baptist Wan, written literary works such as *Sanxianshen Bao Longtu duanyuan* and *Fengyue meng* (Dream of Drizzle and Moonlight) are sources of inspiration for Pu Lin in his creation of the story of Pi Wu. However, a close reading of his story *Pure-Wind Dyke* seems to indicate that the broad social context around the early Qing and Pu Lin’s life experience in Qing Yangzhou dominated Pu Lin’s creation. Like most folk arts performers in Imperial China, Pu Lin was not in the contemporary educated elite circle, and thus his work was not included in the literature of the time. Before the Qing *Rogue Pi Wu*, both

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131 Liu, “Jianlun Qingfengzha”; Wan, “Regional Fiction Clear Wind Sluice (Qingfengzha 1819)”; “Local Fiction of the Yangzhou Region: Qingfengzha”.

132 In this part, I exclusively base my textual analysis on the story of Pi Wu in the Huaxuanzhai edition of *Qingfengzha* reprinted in 1996. As I have discussed in Chapter 1, the Huanxuanzhai edition of *Qingfengzha* was transcribed from Pu Lin’s repertoire.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Ming novels *Jin Ping Mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話 (*Plum in the Golden Vase with Parts in Verse*) and *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (*The Unofficial History of the Scholars*) are modelled on the daily lives of ordinary people and represent a world of everyday experience. On a similar note, Pu Lin was inspired more by the social context of Qing Yangzhou, the urban popular culture—literally “market-and-street culture” (*shijìng wénhuà* 市井文化) and the mindset of Chinese people in traditional China than by the literati’s works such as *Jin Ping Mei cihua* and *Rulin waishi* when creating his story of Pi Wu.

The performers’ daily life experiences typically provide real-life material for their creations. Since traditional Chinese chantefables were produced for and by ordinary people and drew on their real-life experiences, they inevitably involved characters living at the bottom of society, such as rogues, beggars, thieves, and robbers, as well as various industries necessary to people’s daily lives. Pu’s narration in his repertoire of Pi Wu is not exceptional. Pu Lin lived in the Qianlong era when Yangzhou underwent its second golden age in history. In creating the story, Pu Lin focused his attention on people he was familiar with, the experiences he had, and the joys and sorrows of his life. In the *Qingfengzha*, he depicted a restaurant, a furniture store, a shop selling southern goods, a butcher’s shop, a public bathhouse, and a pawnbroker. He successfully portrayed various characters ranging from bosses to peddlers and itinerant vendors by depicting their daily conversations and mental activities. Details such as the simple and crude beddings, stove, bowls, chopsticks, and firewood used at the thatched cottage were also presented. He even mentioned the

price of vegetables, the daily expenses of a family of three, and the tools for selling vegetables. He talked about the sad lives of the poor. In addition, he pictured the daily life experiences of the butcher, the bean-curd maker, and the knaves. His story centred on the social lives of the bottom strata of Qing Yangzhou where he lived.

When listening to the story of Pi Wu, we can learn about Pi Wu’s crafty conduct and his interest in gambling, as well as Qing Yangzhou city where Pi Wu lived his whole life. Why did Pu Lin portray Pi Wu as a tricky but righteous rogue indulging in gambling? Why did Pu make an effort to depict pawnbrokers? Why did Pu include a murder case in the story?

Knavishness, pawning, and gambling are the three major character traits that are possessed by Pi Wu and reflect some aspects of the urban culture of traditional China. In the story of Pi Wu, Pi Fengshan is called “Pi Wu lazi” or “Rogue Pi Wu,” where lazi is a Yangzhou slang, meaning wulai 無賴 or “rogues.” Historically, these terms offer linguistic evidence suggesting that rogues had received attention at that time. For example, in his book Fangyan 方言 (Dialect), the Western Han philosopher and philologist Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BC-AD 18) defined the three words yangwang 央亡, mochi 喫屎, and huo 呸 as kuei 獪, meaning “sly and roguish,” and a “sly and roguish person” who is sometimes referred in the area between the Yangtze River and the Xiang River as wulai. The word lazi was also found in Cao Xueqin’s 曹雪芹 (ca.1715-ca.1763) Honglou meng 紅樓夢 (A Dream of the Red Chamber), where it

134 Lu Deyang 陸德陽, Liumang shi 流氓史 (A History of Rogues), (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1995); Qu Yanbing 曲彥斌, Diandang shi 典當史 (A History of Pawn Brokerage), (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1993); Ge Chunyuan 戈春源, Dubo shi 賭博史 (A History of Gambling), (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1995).
135 Yang Xiong, Fangyan, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), 113.
was used to describe the female character Wang Xifeng 王熙凤. Grandmother Jia introduced Wang as a “popi poluohu” 潑皮破落戶 or “mischievous terror of the house,” which she further interpreted as lazi or “rogue” in the southern provinces of China, hence the nickname, Rogue Feng (Feng lazi 鳳辣子). Both words poluohu and lazi made their appearance in Song dynasty sources.\textsuperscript{136}

Rogue Pi Wu is portrayed as a typical rogue who lived in the Qing era—a person who was deceitful, tricky, and always ready to fight with others, as shown in Pi Wu’s knavish behaviour in the story.\textsuperscript{137} Pi Wu is called “Rogue Pi Wu” because he makes a living through trickery. Pi Wu buys a bed without paying a single coin (qian 錢).\textsuperscript{138} He gets it through tricking the shop owner into believing that the iron bars contained in a bag he is holding to purchase the bed are taels of silver. Pi Wu also fights with Fu Da to get pork for free. He lives in a small room separated from the large room of Ni Si. One night, he disguises himself as a thief hiding in his room to entice Ni to break into his room to catch the thief. However, Pi Wu claims that Ni is a thief when Ni goes to his room looking for the thief. Pi says he will sue Ni unless Ni re-divides his large room and gives the larger half to Pi. Thus, Pi Wu gets a bigger living space by cheating Ni Si.\textsuperscript{139}

The image of rogues is often associated with gambling in traditional China.\textsuperscript{140} As discussed above, Li Dou recorded in the *Yangzhou huafang lu* that the author Pu Lin became rich by playing gambling tricks. In the story, Pi Wu is described as a rogue who plays tricks and indulges in gambling. Although Pi once lost his entire fortune at

\textsuperscript{136} Lu, *Liumang shi*, 8.
\textsuperscript{137} Lu, *Liumang shi*, 1-41.
\textsuperscript{138} *Qian* is a unit of currency equivalent to one/tenth of an ounce or one hundred cash.
\textsuperscript{139} Wang et al. (eds.), *Qingfengzha*, 41; 56; 42.
\textsuperscript{140} Lu, *Liumang shi*, 25.
a gambling party, he continues gambling to the extent that he goes out gambling with his poor friends even on the night of his wedding.\footnote{Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 47.} Logically, Pi should have made a significant effort to rid himself of his gambling addiction after losing all his property. However, according to Pu’s narrative, Pi Wu continues to gamble while living in poverty. One year after his marriage, Pi Wu makes his first big fortune at a gambling party held in Pan Caichen’s house. During the game, gaming tricks are employed by Pi and Pan.\footnote{Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 61-9.} Pi’s gaming conduct at Pan’s house plays a pivotal role in his whole life, which leads to a run of good luck for him.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the gaming funds of rogues were often small. However, some gamblers became wealthy through crafty gambling. Tian Yiheng田藝蘅 (1524-?) recorded in his \textit{Liuqing rizha} 留青日紮 (Daily Records Inscribed on Bamboo Slips) that rogues often engaged in gambling and their gaming funds could be spent only on food and drink.\footnote{Tian Yiheng, \textit{Liuqing rizha}, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992): 3.12-3.} When Pi Wu lives in poverty, his gaming funds is usually no more than two hundred cash coins (liangbai wen 兩百文). Tian also mentioned that gambling parties were rampant in the Ming era in Changshu 常熟, a county under the jurisdiction of Suzhou Prefecture, not far away from Yangzhou.\footnote{Tian, \textit{Liuqing rizha}, 3.13.} According to historical records from the Qing era, rogues living in the area around the Taihu 太湖 Lake or between Jiangsu and Zhejiang used to organise gambling parties on a boat where a sword and spear were hidden for the purpose of threatening gamblers.\footnote{"Qiang chuan shi mo", 槍船始末 ("The Beginning and End of the Boat with Guns"), in Nanjing daxue Taiping Tianguo shi yanjiushi 南京大學太平天國史研究室 (Nanjing University’s Office of Research on the History of the} In the story, one can find both poor people and rich people at gambling

\footnote{141 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 47. \hfill 142 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 61-9.\hfill 143 Tian Yiheng, \textit{Liuqing rizha}, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992): 3.12-3.\hfill 144 Tian, \textit{Liuqing rizha}, 3.13.\hfill 145 “Qiang chuan shi mo” 槍船始末 ("The Beginning and End of the Boat with Guns"), in Nanjing daxue Taiping Tianguo shi yanjiushi 南京大學太平天國史研究室 (Nanjing University’s Office of Research on the History of the}
parties. Pi Wu makes a big fortune through cheating and playing tricks in a gambling party organised by his father’s friend, Pan Caichen. As indicated in the subheading “Eight knavish merchants gather together for gambling” (Ba man jü du 八蠻聚賭) in Pu’s version of the story, Pan Caichen invites several wealthy merchants to his house to organise a gambling party, aiming to take their wealth by playing tricks with the aid of Pi Wu. While gambling, Pan and Pi communicate through code words and won a substantial amount. They do not resort to the spear or the sword, but their tricks are just as sharp, as they cheat all of Yao Er’s property in two days.

Gambling is filled with trickery, such as “to let the enemy off to catch him later” (yuqin guzong 欲擒故縱) or “to put on a pompous and pretentious show” (xuzhang shengshi 虛張聲勢), which are often used by gamblers regardless of their social and economic status. Characters in Pu’s narrative also play these two tricks. Pan Caicheng asks Pi Wu to pretend to be a wealthy merchant living on a luxury boat, enticing others to attend the gambling party through the display of his luxury lifestyle and great fortune. Pan also requests Pi to refuse his invitation first and then accept reluctantly. On the day of the gambling, Pi follows Pan’s advice to be late to the party and dressed as a wealthy merchant. Pi Wu’s fancy food and clothes are depicted in detail through the dialogues of Pan and his servant. After the party, Pi gives Pan five thousand taels of real silver as his fee for organising the scam gambling party.

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146 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 64-9.
147 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 68.
148 Ge, Dubo Shi, 159-85.
149 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 65; 68.
Pawning is also part of the traditional Chinese “market-street” culture. Pawning originated from as early as the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). There were many descriptions of pawnbrokers or pawning behaviours in traditional Chinese vernacular literature, such as Yuan drama, Ming-Qing fiction and folk performance literature. Narratives addressed the practice of pawning in works of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties and documented the tradition of pawnshops. In the late Ming and early Qing eras, more than half of the pawnshops in the whole country were owned by people from Shanxi. In the episode, when Pi does not have sufficient money, he often pawns his belongings such as pants, clothes, and his wife’s dowry in exchange for cash. For example, Unit 62 of the Pi Wu lazi on “Pawning a living treasure through trickery” narrates how Pi Wu cheats a pawn shop owner. Pi Wu puts a live mouse into a black box and cheats the owner that the box contains a live treasure. The event happened in a pawn shop and many aspects of the pawning industry, such as methods to determine a treasure and the appearance of the high counter desk in the pawn shop, are narrated. When Pi becomes wealthy, he opens a pawnshop. Why does he choose to run a pawnshop? In the Qing dynasty, the pawn industry enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and achieved a level as high as the salt and wood industries. Moreover, the imperial court charged only a small tax on pawnshops, which was much less than the other two industries. Pawnshops owners in Qing dynasty paid only a few silver taels to the government as annual tax, regardless of their business.

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150 Yang Zhaoyu 杨肇遇, Zhongguo diandang ye 中国典當業 (Chinese Pawn Industry), (Shanghai: Shanghai shangwu yinhuguan, 1929), 1.
152 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 508-15.
153 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 79-81.
scale.\textsuperscript{154} From this perspective, Pi Wu’s decision to open a pawnshop reflects the status of the pawn industry in the Qing era.

The significance of the court case story chosen by Pu Lin lies more in the way that shows two ideas coexisting in the minds of ordinary people during Qing times: a righteous court official such as Bao Zheng is necessary to ensure peaceful life but divine retribution is also presented. The narrative of Pi Wu is modelled on the lives of Yangzhou people in the eighteenth century, but a court case included in the narrative is set in Dingyuan 定遠 Country (Anhui province today) during the Song dynasty. In addition, \textit{Pure-Wind Dyke} is not told as a conventional court case story because there is no detailed account of criminal offences or the trial. Why did Pu narrate in this way? In the story, Pi Wu enjoys the blessing of mysterious power in gambling parties for several times and subsequently becomes wealthy. He avenges Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji who kills Sun Dali, the father of his wife Sun Xiaogu successfully with the help of Bao Zheng 包拯 (999-1062), commonly known as Lord Bao or Bao Gong 包公, a high-ranking official of the Northern Song dynasty famous in history for his great integrity and intelligence as demonstrated in his act of punishing corrupt officials and deciding difficult cases. Why is Pi Wu so lucky? Why does Bao Zheng who lived in the Song dynasty exist in a Qing dynasty story?

Classic Chinese court case stories and the iconic representation of Lord Bao, reflect the traditional mindset of the Chinese. Storytellers, dramatists, and novelists interweave their wishes into their creations, as commonly seen in the drama and traditional tale-telling produced in the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing eras. These works create an icon of an honest and upright court official (\textit{qingguan 清官}), who punishes

\textsuperscript{154} Qu, \textit{Diandang shi}, 63.
evildoers and corrupt officials for the ordinary people. The most famous honest and upright court official is undoubtedly Lord Bao, who appears in a variety of works from the Song era onwards and is modelled on the real Song court official Bao Zheng. Whenever there is Lord Bao, there will be a court case in Ming-Qing literature. In the story of Pi Wu narrated by Pu Lin, Sun Xiaogu and their neighbours do nothing after discovering the criminal conducts of Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji but wait a long time for Bao Zheng to judge the case. Xiaogu avenges her mother-in-law and stepbrother with the help of Lord Bao. Although the narration of his detection and trial occupies only a small portion of the story, the audiences of Imperial China, see Bao’s judgment as representation of justice from the court and the Emperor as well.

Like his contemporaries, Pu Lin may have firmly believed in “divine retribution” when creating the story of Pi Wu. This concept was popular in traditional China and reflected in many Chinese literary works. It became one of the recurring motifs in traditional Chinese fiction since it emerged in the literati jottings (biji 筆記) of the Six Dynasties 六朝 (220-589). In addition, it is well represented through the narrative of the murder case and highlighted by the description of Pi Wu’s lucky experiences. Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji dispose of Sun Dali’s body in the kitchen


156 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 89-94.

well, covering the well by building a kitchen over it.\footnote{Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 27.} They believe their criminal conduct will remain undiscovered forever. However, to their shock, Sun Dali’s spirit flies out of the kitchen to save his daughter Xiaogu and even calls for Lord Bao at night.\footnote{Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 34; 88.} Evil cannot escape punishment. In the end, Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji are sentenced to death by Lord Bao.\footnote{Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 95-9.} The narrative of Pi Wu’s life experiences highlights the evil nature of Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji. In contrast to the two villains who are sentenced to death, Pi Wu, with the help of mysterious power, wins a large fortune at gambling and chances upon an even greater one in his house.\footnote{Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 58-60; 73-4.} From this point of view, Pi Wu is very lucky due to the blessings of heaven. Pi Wu is portrayed in Pu Ling’s story as a man of good nature, who performs many good deeds and treats the poor well. As the proverb goes, “Virtue is its own reward.” Pi Wu deserves to have good luck.

Pu Lin created the story based on his life experience in Qing Yangzhou. As one of the ordinary Yangzhou residents in the Qing era, he interwove what he had seen and heard in reality into the narrative of rogue Pi Wu. The traditional Chinese idea of “reward and retribution” is also reflected in his narrative of the murder case.

Indeed, the daily life experiences, the characterisation of Pi Wu and the court-case story as presented in Pu Lin’s narrative are based on real events and social context of Qing Yangzhou.
2.3 Conclusion

Inspired by the contemporary social context and his life experience in Yangzhou during the Qing dynasty, Pu Lin created the story *Pure-Wind Dyke* and adapted it into Yangzhou storytelling for public performance. Gong Wuting developed Pu’s repertoire into a more attractive one and thus became one of the two founders of the Pu School; his repertoire was developed and transmitted through the traditional oral transmission model *kouchuan xinshou* to Yang Mingkun. As the present inheritor of the repertoire of the Pu School’s *Rogue Pi Wu*, Yang learnt the repertoire from his master—the eighth-generation heir of the Pu School—Yu Youchun and recreated it by incorporating narrative, rhetorical, theatrical, linguistic, thematic elements from various genres of literature and performing arts, thus forming a distinctive style of his own that is “Yang School of Pi Wu.”
THREE

Performance Space and the Audience

Yang Mingkun mentioned to me that he preferred to perform at the story house as he could feel the traditional atmosphere there. Although he has his own business and is busy with performance, Yang regularly performs Yangzhou pinghua at the Pi Wu Story House built and decorated in a traditional Chinese style.\(^{162}\) In this chapter, I will examine the tradition of his performance arena and includes a historical overview of this aspect.

Yangzhou story houses emerged as a commercial performance space specifically for Yangzhou storytellers in the Qing dynasty. The performance of Yangzhou storytelling features the folding fan and talking stopper, which have become props for storytelling since the mid-Ming or earlier. This new genre of oral performing arts immediately attracted a strong interest from both the illiterate and the educated social elite after it emerged. This chapter aims to examine the tradition of the performance space and the audience composition of Yangzhou pinghua performance by referring to historical works and contemporary studies, and data collected from my participant-observation of Yang Mingkun’s performance at Pi Wu Story House in Yangzhou. I will first describe what the Pi Wu Story House looks like, the audience watching Yang’s performance at the Pi Wu Story House; and what Yang uses in his performance. Secondly, I will explore the historical development of the performance space for the storyteller and the Yangzhou story house. Also, I will discuss the props used in Yangzhou pinghua performance. Lastly, I will conduct a historical exploration

\(^{162}\) Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
of the composition of the audience of Yangzhou pinghua, aiming to examine the development of audience of the repertoire of Pi Wu of the Pu School.

3.1 Yang Mingkun and the Pi Wu Story House

Traditional performance space considerably contributes to the traditional register where Yang Mingkun performs his repertoire of the Pu School. According to Foley, the material objects and physical arenas of performance associated with the storytelling arts can also be perceived as making up a “dedicated register” or physical idiom.163 The Pi Wu Story House is the most well-known place in Yangzhou for watching the Yangzhou pinghua performance by Yang Mingkun, where the performance space considerably contributes to Yang’s captivating performance. Yang Mingkun regularly performs every weekend at Pi Wu Story House. In Qing Yangzhou, story houses were concentrated in the area between the Dongguan and Caiyi Streets.164 The famous Pi Wu Story House is also located in Dongguan Street.

163 Foley, The Singer of Tales in Performance, 7.
164 Lei Mengshui 雷夢水 et al. (eds.) Zhonghua zhuzhi ci 中華竹枝詞 (Chinese Bamboo-branch Songs), (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1997), 76.
On the last day of July in 2016, I went to Pi Wu Story House to watch Yang Mingkun’s *pinghua* storytelling performance at eight o’clock in the morning. Pi Wu Story House is decorated in traditional Chinese style. The waiters were dressed in Qing gowns, wearing a hat with a fake pigtail. A waiter stood at the entrance to the story house to attract people walking along Dongguan Street to enjoy the *pinghua* performance (Figure 3.1). A black wooden board horizontally inscribed with four green characters 皮五書場, meaning “Pi Wu Story House,” is hung above the gate. A vertical signboard is hung on either side of the gate, the board on the right reads “The storytelling narrates on the sour, sweetness, and bitterness of life” (*Pingshuo rensheng suantianku* 評説人生酸甜苦) and the board on the left “Dishes cooked in homemade style taste delicious” (*Jingpeng jiaxiu daokouxiang* 精烹傢饈到口香). Above each of the two vertical signboards is a red lantern hanging from the eaves. On the left side wall, next to the gate, there is a stone stela embedded in the wall, containing a large character 皮 in green on the top left corner and a painting in gold at the bottom half (Figure 3.1).

On entering the Pi Wu Story House, a few people were already sitting inside, waiting for Yang to perform the storytelling of *Rogue Pi Wu* (Figure 3.2). Most of them were Yangzhou locals as they spoke the Yangzhou dialect. Interestingly, several children aged around eight years old sat close to the stage talking about Pi Wu with their grandparents.

About thirty minutes before the performance, people walked around Yang’s stage and took photos. The stage is set against the back wall of the house, facing the gate and surrounded by black wooden handrails. The stage
area is no more than four square metres. In the centre of the stage is a small square desk with a chair behind it (Figure 3.3). On the desk, there is a folding fan and a small black wooden talking-stopper. The desk and chair are covered with a bright blue cloth with pink peonies and purple butterflies embroidered on it. In a way, the bright blue, red, and yellow colours help the audiences recall the traditional Chinese cultural elements.

Three oiled paper umbrellas are opened and hung upside down above the stage. On both sides of the picture, a Chinese red knot called Zhongguo jie 中国结 is hung along with three small lanterns (Figure 3.4). At the back of the stage is a picture frame with the characters “Shui bao pi” 水包皮 written, followed by the line below by “Guangling qin Yangzhou wei” 廣陵琴揚州味 written in a smaller font. Interestingly, the three characters 水包皮 can be read either from left to right or from right to left (Figure 3.4).

The tradition of Yangzhou people daily life is vividly described as Zaoshang pibaoshui, wanshang shuibaopi 早上皮包水，晚上水包皮, meaning “to have morning tea in the morning and to have a bath in the evening.” The literary meaning of pi bao shui is “skin contains the water” and that of shui bao pi “water envelops the skin,” the former being a metaphorical reference to “tea (water) going into the body” and the latter “a person in a bathhouse pool.” Thus, the three characters serve as an introduction to the traditional Yangzhou daily life.

In the Pi Wu Story House, traditional Yangzhou morning tea with steamed desserts are served every morning. Customers were served traditional Yangzhou morning tea with steamed desserts. They sat around tables and enjoyed food and tea.
while waiting for Yang’s performance. They would not need to pay for watching Yang’s performance, but payment is required for the tea and dessert. The tradition of Yangzhou people enjoying morning tea and having a bath in the evening is reflected in the story of Rogue Pi Wu recited by Yang. For example, Pi Wu speaks of morning tea when encouraging bystanders to donate money to an old homeless lady. He says:165

You guys, when you have morning tea in the teahouse tomorrow, please order noodles instead of dessert, or a bowl of congee instead of sesame seed cakes. Give the money you have saved to this old lady.

Traditionally, steamed desserts and sliced bean-curd salads are offered for morning tea; tea food (chashi 茶食), namely various flavours of dim sum, are offered for late afternoon tea (wancha 晚茶). For example, in the narrative of Pi Wu recited by Yang, Pi Wu goes to a teahouse and says to himself, “Steamed rice cakes are sold here, and the morning tea. Excellent!”166

Yang Mingkun enjoyed morning tea with his old friends in the Pi Wu Story House before going up on stage. They sat at a round table, talking and laughing, and exchanging news. At around 7:55 AM, he took a cup of tea and went to the stage, adjusted his microphone and took off his glasses. Next, he started his story with his real experiences in Australia and Europe and subsequently introduced traditional Yangzhou culture when he inserted two episodes of Pi Wu. As usual, Yang was

165 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 347.
166 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 248.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

dressed in traditional clothes as for performance, sat behind the desk and performed his story vividly.

According to Yang, he rarely performs the complete repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu in the Pi Wu Story House. Only the episodes of Pi Wu that typically embody the Yangzhou local cultural are incorporated into his current repertoire and performed as part of his newly created narrative about the current happenings.167 Thus, the audiences in Pi Wu Story House will get the opportunity to enjoy Yang’s repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu in his newly created story. For example, he tells how an old woman has her congee when introducing Yangzhou traditional morning tea; he explains to his audience the skills of the massage master of a public bathhouse when interpreting Yangzhou traditional service in public bathhouses. He portrayed two figures in the story of Rogue Pi Wu, including Mama Zhang, and the master of a public bathhouse called “Baiyu Tang” or “White-Jade Hall.” Below is the description of the massage service at the public bathhouse in Qing Yangzhou:168

The massage master pounds the back of the customer while counting the number of strikes. His massage skills are excellent. Why? Let us see how he massaged Pi Wu’s back. He thumped his back in several styles. The first style is called “A crested myna takes a bath” (bager’r xizao 八哥儿洗澡), and then “A magpie stands on the branch of a plum tree” (xique dengmei 喜鹊登梅), then “A wild duck searches for food” (yeya taoshi 野鸭淘食) and “A hundred birds pay homage to the phoenix” (bainiao chaofeng 百鸟朝凤),

167 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
168 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 112.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

and the last is “The phoenix nods three times” (fenghuang san diantou 凤凰三点头).

The massage service provided at the Yangzhou public bath house features the traditional customs practised by Yangzhou locals. According to Yang, nearly all the audiences want to experience Yangzhou massage services after listening to the passage above in the Pi Wu Story House. Yang stated in the interview, “My repertoire is comical. People laugh all the time when listening to my story. Why do they come here to listen to my storytelling? They want to be happy. In my performance and recreation, the audience’s request is priority.” During Yang’s sixty-minute performance, the audiences responded to him with delight and excitement.

It is noticeable that Yang always uses a folding fan and a talking stopper in the performance. The Pi Wu Story House and the performance stage inside are in traditional Chinese style; and the waiters in the story house are all dressed in Qing style. Most of the audience members are locals of Yangzhou.

3.2 The Tradition of Yangzhou Story House

Yangzhou story houses evolved from teahouses in Yangzhou in Qing times and have since served as commercial performance spaces for Yangzhou storytellers. Thus, it is not surprising that the waiters in the present-day Pi Wu Story House are all attired in a typical Qing style. Storytelling is a genre of Chinese

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169 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 31 July 2016.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

oral performance art with its history datable to the Han dynasty (202-220). Since the 1950s, Chinese archaeologists have discovered about 100 pieces of Han pottery figurines performing storytelling/singing, most of them excavated from burial sites in Sichuan 四川 as shown in Figure 3.5 with occasional finds from Han tombs in other parts of China such as the one from Huyang 胡杨 Han Tomb in Yangzhou (e.g. Figure 3.6). Generally referred to as “pottery figurines that beat drum while performing storytelling/singing” (jigu shuochang yong 擊鼓說唱俑) in Chinese archaeology, these figurines are material evidence for the prevalence of oral performance during the Han dynasty.

Where did storytellers perform when storytelling first emerged? How did story houses emerge and become a specific performance space for Yangzhou storytellers? How did Yangzhou storytellers charge the fee for their performances in the story house during the Qing dynasty?

The earliest recorded commercial theatre, where professional entertainers and performers including storytellers had their regular performances, emerged in the Song dynasty. The performance space was a designated area surrounded by handrails known as bolan weixi 搏欄為戲 was designated for oral and theatrical performance in the entertainment quarters. Most such spaces were named either with the word “shed” (peng 棚), as in “musical shed” (yuepeng 樂棚), or with the word “rail” (lan 欄), as in


171 Chen Ruheng, Songdai shuoshu shi (The History of the Storytelling of the Song Dynasty), (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyu chubanshe, 1979), 20.
“balustrade” (goulan 勾欄);  
172 these entertainment quarters were scattered in the 
capital cities of Song dynasty such as Bianliang 汴梁 (modern Kaifeng), Lin’an 臨安 (modern Hangzhou) and Chengdu 成都 were called “title” (wa 瓦 or wazi 瓦子).  
173 Also known as tile-roofed market (wasi 瓦肆 or washi 瓦市), entertainment quarters 
varied in size and scope. Some quarters were so large that they contained more than 
ten balustrade theatres. One good example was the Beiwa 北瓦 Entertainment Quarters 
in Lin’an the capital of the Southern Song dynasty, which contained thirteen balustrade 
theatres, two of which were devoted to storytelling.  
174

During the Song dynasty, storytellers performed in the teahouse on a regularly 
basis. For example, Mother Wang’s Family Teahouse (Wang mama jia chasi 王媽媽家茶肆) in Lin’an was also known by its nickname as “The Tea Room with a Cave-
load of Ghosts (Yiku gui chafang 一窟鬼茶坊) as storytellers usually performed the 
famous story “A Cave-load of Ghosts” in it.  
175 Similar examples are found in the 
famous Song literati jottings titled Yijian zhi 夷堅志 (Records of Yijian) by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202).  
176

In the Ming dynasty, folk arts performers including storytellers started to 
perform regularly in Buddhist temples and Daoist monasteries and in the open-air

172 Meng Yuanlao 孟元老 (ca.960-ca.1127) Dongjing meng hua lu 東京夢華録 (Recording Dreams of the Prosperity in the Eastern Capital), (Beijing: Zhongguo shangye chubanshe, 1982): 8. 53; 2.15.  
173 Nai Deweng 耐德翁 (fl.1125), Ducheng jisheng 都城紀勝 (Recording the Splendours of the Capital), (Beijing: Zhongguo shangye chubanshe, 1982), 8; Xihu Laoren 西湖老人 (ca.1127-ca.1279), Xihu laoren fansheng lu 西湖老人繁勝錄 (Records of the Grandeur by An Old Man of the West Lake), (Beijing: Zhongguo shangye chubanshe, 1982), 16.  
174 Xihu Laoren, Xihu laoren fansheng lu, 16.  
175 Wu Zimu 吳自牧 (ca.1127- ca.1207), Meng liang lu 夢粱錄 (Records of a Pipe Dream), (Shanghai: guji chubanshe, 1956): 16. 262.  
markets. During the reign of Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (r.1368-1398) and Zhu Di 朱棣 (r.1402-1424) in the early Ming dynasty, the imperial government implemented a series of economic, political, and cultural policies to strengthen its regime. Subsequently, various genres of folk arts including storytelling were forbidden. Later, in the mid-Ming period, an increasing number of markets appeared owing to eased policies so storytellers could continue to perform regularly in the entertainment quarters like their predecessors in the Song dynasty. Buddhist and Daoist temples and monasteries became their regular performance spaces as well. Thus, storytelling performance also enjoyed popularity from the late Ming to the early Qing period. Storytelling became a predominant form of mass entertainment in the late Ming and early Qing dynasty, for which evidence abounds in literary works from this period.

The Kangxi era (1662-1722) of the Qing dynasty witnessed the rise of two distinctive groups of storytelling, i.e., the Southern storytelling (nanfang pinghua 南方評話) and the Northern storytelling (beifang pingshu 北方評書). Yangzhou was the centre of the Southern group. In southern China, storytellers performed outdoors only occasionally. In the market, under the shade of a big umbrella or a large piece of cloth, storytellers sat behind a desk and held a folding fan when performing. However, in northern China, the storytellers usually performed outdoors. Until the late Qing period, it became more common to perform indoors. Influenced by the tradition

177 Zhang Li 張利, “‘Shuihu’ pinghua (pingshu) yu shuohua chuangtong yanjiu” 《水滸》評話(評書)與説話傳統研究 (“Study on the Pinghua/Pingshu of The Water Margin and the Tradition of Storytelling”), (Ph.D. diss., Yangzhou University, 2012), 74.
178 Zhang, “‘Shuihu’ pinghua (pingshu) yu shuohua chuangtong yanjiu”, 76-7.
179 Hu, Huaben xiaoshuo gailun, 614.
180 The tradition of outdoor storytelling is reflected in the following two paintings: Zhang Hong 張宏 (1577-1652), “Zaji youxi tu” 雜技遊戲圖 (“Picture of Acrobatics and Games”); “Shuo lutian shu” 說露天書 (“Performing Storytelling in the Open Air”), in the Tuhua ribao 圖畫日報 (Pictures Daily), (Shanghai Pictures Daily,1909)
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

of performing indoors in the south, northern storytellers began to perform in teahouses and story houses.181

The tradition of Yangzhou teahouse dates back to the Tang dynasty. The rich and sophisticated tea culture in Yangzhou is also traceable to the Tang dynasty when Yangzhou was the transport junction connecting the north and south. Back then, Yangzhou was also the distribution centre for salt, tea and jewel merchants, and its water for tea, particularly the water at Yangzhou Da Ming 大明 Temple enjoyed the fame as “the fifth most flavourful of the Tang Dynasty.”182 Subsequently, when fresh spring tea was available on the market, merchants, court officials and literati gathered together at Yangzhou to enjoy the tea brewed with fresh tea leaves and sweet-tasting water. Later, teahouses started to emerge in Tang Yangzhou as there was an increasing number of people who regularly went to Yangzhou to enjoy the tea.183 The tea business in Yangzhou flourished most of the time from the Tang up to the Qing dynasty with a short period of recession during the Song dynasty.184

Historical records suggest that Yangzhou pinghua storytellers performed in the teahouse since the early Qing period. Storytellers performed in a teahouse or story house regularly in the south of China since the late Ming dynasty, particularly in present-day Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. According to Guo Lin, “Storytellers played regularly in the teahouse. People needed to go there early before the

181 Zhang, ‘‘Shuihu’ pinghua (pingshu) yu shuohua chuangtong yanjiu”, 77.
182 Zhang Youxin 張又新 (fl. 813), Xu Xianzhong 徐獻忠 (1469-1545), Zhou Lujing 周履靖 (1549-1640), Tian Yiheng, Jian chashui ji 煎茶水記 (Memory on Brewing Tea), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 5.
performance. Otherwise, there would be no room for them to even stand and watch the performance.”185 Liu Jingting, one of the pioneers of Yangzhou pinghua, used to perform pinghua in the Yangzhou Hongqiao 虹橋 teahouse around the early Qing period. Liu is quoted by Li Dou in the Yangzhou huafang lu as saying:186

“I used to tell the story of the Southern Ning (Ning Nan 宁南) with Liu Jingting in Hongqiao Teahouse. We hit the desk to create the rhythm for performance.” Thus, storytelling performance is called “tea desk” (cha zhuozi 茶桌子).

In Chinese, the terms chaguan 茶館, chashe 茶社, chashe 茶舍, chalou 茶樓, and chafang 茶坊 all refer to “teahouse.” However, most Qing Yangzhou teahouses had the word “yuan” 園 (garden) in their names as they were usually built within a garden.187 For example, Li Dou listed some of the teahouses in Qing Yangzhou in his Yangzhou huafang lu, such as Yechun Yuan Garden 冶春園, Fengle Yuan Garden 豐樂園, Xiao Fanghu 小方壺 or “Little Square Pot.”188 Teahouses in Rogue Pi Wu also had beautiful names, such as Fusheng Yuan Garden 複盛園 and Guangsheng Luxurious House 廣盛居.189

186 For an account concerning Liu Jingting, please see Børdahl, Lifestyle and Entertainment in Yangzhou, 179. Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 262.
188 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 23; 26-7.
189 Wang et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 123; 225.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

In the Qing dynasty, Yangzhou story houses emerged to cater to the needs of the audiences in the teahouses, acting as a performance space specifically for Yangzhou storytellers. There appeared to be three types of teahouses in Yangzhou during the late Ming era: the pure teahouse (qing chasi 清茶肆), where only tea was served, the meat-dish teahouse (hun chasi 菜茶肆), where tea and dishes were served and the story teahouse (shu chasi 書茶肆), the last of which directly derived from the pure teahouse. In the shu chasi, customers enjoyed tea in the morning and Yangzhou pinghua and ballad singing (tanci 弹词) in the afternoon. The shu chasi owner invited storytellers to perform regularly in his teahouse, and he charged the audience a fee for the tea and performance. On the occasion when there was no performance, shu chasi acted as qing chasi serving tea. In this case, regular customers were not happy as they were addicted to storytelling performances and had to enjoy every day. Later, to satisfy their needs, the owner promised to provide a storytelling performance in the shu chasi throughout the year. The storytellers successfully attracted a big audience to the shu chasi, which later developed into shuchang or story house, a place used for storytelling performances in the Qing dynasty. According to Li Dou, “A significant number of story houses were located in each and every street and lane in Yangzhou.”

The increasing number of story houses was closely related to the popularity of the Yangzhou storytelling industry in the Qing era. At the beginning of the Qianlong era, a poem in the Yangzhou zhuzhi ci 揚州竹枝詞 (Yangzhou Bamboo-branch Songs)

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190 Ke, “Su wenxue de diyu gexing yu dushi xiaofei qingjie”, 133.
191 Cao Yongsheng 曹永森, Yangzhou fengsu 揚州風俗 (Yangzhou Traditional Customs), (Jiangsu: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2001), 22.
192 Ke, “Su wenxue de diyu gexing yu dushi xiaofei qingjie”, 132-3; Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue, 205.
193 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 207.
by Dong Weiye 董偉業 (fl.1740) described the success of Yangzhou pinghua of the
time: “Pinghua storytellers and tanci players performed Stories of Sui-Tang Heroes
whenever they go; The good and brave men and heroes came from a different part of
the country. They performed in the Zhuge Garden and Shuili Lane; And the Maitreya-
Temple Lane turns into a cockpit.” The last two lines named the landmark buildings
in Qing Yangzhou that were all located around Dongguan Street. They are Zhuge 諸
葛 Garden, Shulidao 疏理道 Lane, Maitreya 彌陀 Temple, and Douji chang 鬥雞場
or “Cockpit.” Although Dongguan Street was short and narrow, there were four story
houses illustrating its popularity among the locals.

In the late Qing era, there were
sixteen story houses in Yangzhou, six of
which were located near the military drill
ground called “jiaochang” 教場 (Figure
3.7). Jiaochang was the entertainment
centre of Yangzhou city, filled with clusters
of story houses, tea houses, wine shops,
fortune tellers and folk arts performers. The
daily scenes of Jiaochang in late Qing were recorded in the story of Pi Wu narrated by
Yang Mingkun:196

Jiaochang was initially built to train the army. Indeed, military
instructors rarely went to Jiaochang. In the beginning, only fortune

194 Lei, Zhonghua zhuzhi ci, 1311.
195 Ke, Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue, 206.
196 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 2.
tellers came here to set up stalls. Later, martial art performers, folk
song singers, and jugglers also came here to set up stalls.

As there are many folk arts performers here, people are
attracted to come here to watch their performances. People who
want to buy or sell something, or who are carrying a load or pushing
a cart, or the peddlers selling buckets or vegetables flock here. In
the afternoon, peddlers are busy cooking wontons, rice dumplings,
sesame seed cakes, and congee. A great variety of food is found here.
The rich come here and say, “There are lots of people here every
day. The square is an awesome place for my business.” Tea houses
and wine shops are built in sequence at Jiaochang. As a result,
Jiaochang becomes a busy area. During festivals, it gets even more
crowded here.

In 1767 or the thirty-second year of the Qianlong era, Jiaochang was still used as a
base for army training. It was not until the late Qing era that Jiaochang became a
commercial and entertainment centre of Yangzhou. The account presented above is
absent from Pu Lin’s repertoire as Jiaochang was an army training centre in his time.
It was added by subsequent generations of storytellers of the Pu School.

Since the early Qing period, Yangzhou storytellers performed not only in
teahouses and story houses but also on pleasure boats and in private houses—a popular
form of performance known as tanghui shuchang 堂會書場. There were many
pleasure boats used for storytelling on the Baozhang 保障 River of Yangzhou, where
performers sang, recited, or played musical instruments, as vividly described by Li
Dou in his Yangzhou huafang lu.197

197 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 253.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

The boat where performers staged their show was ahead of the boat that accommodated the audiences. The former floated upstream but the latter went down stream. Thus, the audiences could visibly enjoy the performance very well. Pure singing sounded the best among the performance, and in the second place were singing or telling accompanied by multi-repetition wind and percussion ensemble, such as gongs and drums, a form of local comedy sketch—literally “hitting on horseback” (ma shang zhuang 馬上撞), folk singing, a genre of local opera prevalent in Jiangnan (tanhuang 灏簧), comic dialogue, storytelling and the like.

In the Qing baileichao 清稗類鈔 (Classified Collection of Qing Dynasty Anecdotal Accounts), Xu Ke 徐珂 (1869-1928) described two Yangzhou storytellers performing in a private mansion, “There were many storytellers in Yangzhou. For example, a blind woman and an old man, with a lute in five chi 尺 198 high, went to the residences of wealthy families to perform.”199

From the above descriptions, we know that Chinese storytellers were beginning to have their own performance space during the Song dynasty. Since the early Qing era when Yangzhou pinghua emerged as a genre of vernacular performing arts, Yangzhou pinghua storytellers already had the tradition of performing in the teahouses.

Compared with the Pi Wu Story House, the Yangzhou storyteller’s performance space and stage were simpler in the Qing dynasty. Lin Sumen 林蘇門 (ca.1748-1809) offered a description of the stage of the time in Hanjiang sanbai yin 鋳江三百吟 (Three Hundred Songs on the Han River), “In a rented house, storytellers are invited to perform. The storyteller performs by sitting on a chair on stage. The

198 Chi, a unit of length (approximately one third of a metre).
199 Xu Ke, Qing baileichao (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 4953.
The performance stage for storytellers in Qing Yangzhou was very simple and small. The stage in Hangzhou was no better. In the *Hangsu yifeng* (Surviving Customs of Hangzhou) by Fan Zushu (ca.1840-ca.1912), there is an account of the performance stage in Hangzhou, “Put a piece of a broad plank on two long benches to build a high stage (gaotai 高臺), and then put a small desk and a chair on it.” The so-called high stage built with benches and a plank was a common performance stage for storytellers in Hangzhou.

In the early years of People’s Republic of China, the layout of Yangzhou story houses was simple, which remained so until the 1990s. In a hall without decoration, a large stage faced the only entrance and long benches were set between the stage and the entrance. During the performance, only water was served. In contrast to the simple style, present-day story houses are much more attractive, as exemplified by Jienan 街南 Story House (Figure 3.8) and Pi Wu Story House.

The talking stopper and the folding fan are the two essential props for Yangzhou pinghua performance. The earliest known mention of talking-stoppers appears in a Ming vernacular novel titled *Pingyao zhuan* (Quelling the Demons’ Revolt), where a blind storyteller Qu 瞿 is described as beating his air bat (qipai 氣拍) when performing pinghua. The lines from the novel are as follows:

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201 Fan Zushu, *Hangsu yifeng* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1989), 50.
202 Fei, “The Traditional Style of Storyhouses in Yangzhou”, 271-85, at 274-75; 280.
203 Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (1330-1400) and Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646), *Pingyao zhuan* (Taming Devils), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 101.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

He [Qu] was asked to sit outside doors behind a small desk, on which there was a small air bat (qipai). Behind the curtain, Mei Er sat in the centre of the house. […] Qu cleared his throat immediately, beat his air bat on the desk and narrated a four-line verse.

Thus, we know that the “air bat” in the passage above should be what has come to be known as “talking-stopper,” which is also called dividing ruler (jiechi 界尺) as mentioned by Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597-1685) in his Tao’an meng yi 陶庵夢憶 (Recollection of Tao’an’s Past Dreams):204

Yang Yumin played a three-stringed plucked instrument, Luo San sang songs, and Lu Jiu played a vertical bamboo flute. Yumin took out a small dividing ruler (jiechi) and sang the story of Plum in the Golden Vase to the Northern tune.

The talking-stopper became a distinctive feature of storytelling performance in the late Ming, although it had not had a specific name back then, as noted in “Kouzhan zeng Liu Jingting ershou” 口占贈柳敬亭二首 (“Two Orally Composed Poems Given to Liu Jingting”) by Li Liangnian 李良年 (1653-1694): “Happenings from the Kaiyuan era appear one after another before the lamplight/they are all submerged in the shadow of light and the noise of playing chess.” His explanatory note to this line reads, “The elderly man applied mouth acrobatics on beat, with a piece of chess and a fan.”205 In the note, “chess” and “fan” appeared in the storytelling performance by “the elderly

204 Zhang Dai, Tao’an meng yi, (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1982): 4. 30.
205 Li Liangnian, Qiu Jing shanfang ji 秋錦山房集 (Collected Works of Qiujin from His Mountain Studio), in Siku quanshu cunmu congshu 四庫全書存目叢書 (The Selected Collection of the Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature), vol. 251 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011): 3.51.
man.” The word qi or “chess” here most probably refers to the talking-stopper used by Liu Jingting, who is referred to as “the elderly man” in the poem.

The wooden plaque hung above the gate of Pi Wu Story House was inscribed with the title of the story house—“Pi Wu shuchang.” A wooden plaque inscribed with the four Chinese characters xingshi liangyan 醒世良言, meaning “good words to awaken the world,” was hung above the gate of the story house in Qing times, as storytellers usually made comments on contemporary and historical figures and events including moral lessons in their narratives. Among the audiences in the story house of the Qing times were illiterate peddlers and caterers and rogues. In the eyes of these people, storytellers were teachers from whom they learnt knowledge and culture, so they called storytellers respectfully as xiansheng 先生 or “teacher” rather than xizi 戲子, a word with derogatory sense that was frequently applied to players and performers of other folk arts in traditional China.

In the Pi Wu Story House, audiences enjoy Yang Mingkun’s performance for free as they have been charged a fee for morning tea and steamed desserts. During the Qing dynasty, audiences in the story house would be charged fees for both the storytelling performance and services. The storyteller and the owner of the story house collaborated to make money. For example, there would be two big bowls placed on the storytelling stage, one for collecting the fee for extra performance (xiaozhuan qian 小轉錢) and the other for collecting admission charges for a regular performance. Typically, the waiter would come out to serve the customer a cup of tea as soon as he sat down in the story house. After a while, candies and snacks were served on the table for the customer. The customer could choose to pay immediately or three times a year.

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206 Ke, Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue, 273.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

At the time when the storyteller tapped the talking stopper on the desk, the waiter would shout “opening mouth” (kaihou 開口) to remind the audience to pay attention to the storytelling. After the storyteller recited the beginning of the story, a waiter would carry a big bowl to collect the performance fees from the customers. At the same time, other waiters served customers towels for cleaning their faces and tips were collected. After collecting the fees, the waiter returned the big bowl to the stage. The storyteller continued to recite his story. The whole performance was divided into four or six parts, which would determine the number of times fees would be charged. Occasionally, if the customers were fascinated by the story and wanted to listen to another round of performance, they would shout “turning over” (dazhuan 打轉). At this time, a waiter charged the xiaozhuan qian by holding to another big bowl. When the waiter shouted, “please come here early tomorrow” (mingri qingzao 明日請早), it was an indication that the performance had ended. After all the customers had left, the storyteller would gather all the xiaozhuan qian in one big bowl. The owner would come out and pour out all the money into another big bowl on the desk. The storyteller and the owner would then divide their earnings equally.207

From time to time, the tradition of fee-charging in the story house, as well as the rule of profit-sharing between the storyteller and the owner would change. Yangzhou huafang lu offered, an account of the type of fee-charging and profits-sharing rule:208

Dadongmen 大東門 story house was next to the toilet of the Shrine to Master Dong [Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (170-104 BC)]. The performance

207 Ke, Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue, 273-4.
208 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 207.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

stage was at the centre of the story house, surrounded by seats. An advertisement was hung above the gate of the story house on which the storyteller’s name was written horizontally and vertically were four characters 开講書詞 (open for storytelling). The landlord and the storyteller took turns to collect fees on odd days and the even days. This type of story house was found in every street in Yangzhou.

In his Hanjiang sanbai yin, Lin recorded a fee-charging mode in a Qing story house:209

After performing three or four sessions, the audience was charged a fee of around ten wen during the break. The money collected in the story house would be distributed according to the commercial rule specifically applied in the evening performance.

It is clear from the above account that story houses in Qing Yangzhou became a popular commercial performance space for storytellers, where storytelling was the only entertainment for customers. Story houses built their business chain: they provided advertisements for storytellers and established a principle of sharing benefits between the story house owner and storyteller.

Based on the discussion above, I discovered that entertainers and performers already had regular performing spaces as early as the Song dynasty. In the Qing dynasty, the increasing requisition demand by customers in tea houses to enjoy Yangzhou pinghua performance and the development of the tradition of fee-charging for pinghua performance stimulated the emergence of the story house—a regular commercial performance space for Yangzhou storytellers. From the mid-Ming era onwards, the use of the folding fan and the talking stopper became more common in

209 Lin, Hanjiang sanbai yin, 109.
storytelling performances. In the early Qing period, the two props already appeared in the storytelling performance by Liu Jingting—the forefather of Yangzhou pinghua.

3.3 The Development of Audience in Yangzhou Storytelling

For more than three centuries, Yangzhou storytelling had been performed since the late Ming and early Qing times. The masterly repertoire of Pi Wu, initially created around the Qinglong era in the Qing dynasty, has been performed by nine generations storytellers of the Pu School. Thus, it can be said that the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu of the Pu School had witnessed the development of Yangzhou storytelling and its supporting audience from the Qianlong era onwards.

The audience of Yangzhou storytelling changed according to the social change in China. In the Pi Wu Story House, most of the audiences are the locals of Yangzhou. In the Qing dynasty, however, Yangzhou storytelling performance was not only enjoyed by the people of Yangzhou but also by those who came from neighbouring provinces and cities. The members of the Yangzhou storytelling audience ranged from court officials, merchants, literati to the illiterate such as rogues, peddlers in the periods of Kangxi 康熙 (r.1661-1722), Yongzheng 雍正 (r.1722-1735), and Qianlong. With its salt monopoly and hydraulic management, Qing Yangzhou enjoyed great cultural and economic prosperity from 1660 to 1799. This was also the time when the ten master Yangzhou storytelling repertoires listed by Li Dou emerged. One of them was Pu Lin’s Pure-Wind Dyke. In China, oral performing arts were not

210 Sun Longfu 孫龍父, “Yangzhou pinghua de lishi fazhan” 揚州評話的歷史發展 ("Historical Development of the Yangzhou Storytelling"), in Song et al (eds.) Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 317-42.
only meant for the people who could not read.211 Prosperous Yangzhou attracted people from near and afar. Merchants, literati, artisans, sailors, retired court officials, and peddlers came to live in Yangzhou. Apart from the new residents, high-level court officials, rogues, Buddhist monks, and Daoist priests passing by Yangzhou were also attracted to Yangzhou for a long sojourn. They formed a special audience group.

During the prosperity period of Yangzhou in Qing dynasty, the development of Yangzhou storytelling was largely due to the support of wealthy residents from Yangzhou. By supporting local folk arts activities, some wealthy residents wanted to show off their wealth or to highlight their exalted social status. Li Dou outlined the daily life of the rich as follows: “The affluent of Yangzhou loved to sleep in the daytime. They slept from morning to evening and had fun from day to day.” 212 It is possible for the wealthy to enjoy the performing arts every day.

The word xiao jinguo’r 銷金鍋兒 refers to a luxurious place first appeared in the Wulin jiushi 武林舊事 (Past Events in Hangzhou) by Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298), in which it was used to refer to the West Lake in Southern Song Lin’an.213 Later, Wang Hang 汪沆 (fl.1736) used it in his poem to refer to The Thin West Lake (Shou xihu 瘦西湖) in mid-Qing Yangzhou.214 According to Li Dou, a wealthy merchant bought pieces of gold foil made from ten thousand taels of gold, and then went to the top-level of the tower located in the Jinshan 金山 mountain. He tossed the gold foil according the direction of the wind, hoping to spend ten thousand taels of gold in one toss.215

212 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 252.
214 Ke, Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue, 284.
215 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 150.
Also, it was common practice among the wealthy people to invite famous storytellers to perform on ceremonial occasions at their residences. Usually, they paid the performers a high price. Li Dou recorded the performance by a famous artist on a private pleasure boat, “After performing one session on a boat, the artist was given one thousand taels of gold or silver.”216

Besides highlighting their exalted social status, there was also political motivation in spending money on the performers by the wealthy salt merchants in Yangzhou. In the eighteenth century, “the salt merchants who played a crucial role in the economic development of Yangzhou, were enthusiastic patrons of the arts.”217 While Yangzhou salt merchants were extremely wealthy, they were actually put at the service of the Emperor. They could not participate in the political life of the imperial court as the royal aristocrats did. They did not have enough political power to ensure a better life for themselves in the future. Thus, these salt merchants resorted to strengthen their relationship with the Emperor and court officials by organising parties at luxurious gardens and entertaining them with meals, music and theatrical performances, and other forms of folk arts. Well-known storytellers were often invited to perform for the royal and noble at the parties.

The ordinary people, including the poor and rogues, also contributed to the development of Yangzhou storytelling. The activity of enjoying folk arts performance at a private house or story house initially created by the wealthy prevailed amongst the Yangzhou people. Ordinary families invited storytellers to perform at ceremonies held in the private houses while the poor usually patronized a story house to enjoy a round

216 Li, Yangzhou huafang lu, 275.
of storytelling. In the preface of “Shuchang si shou” ("Four Poems on the Story House") in *Hanjing sanbai yin*, Lin Sumen offered a description of storytelling performance at a private residence in Qing Yangzhou:218

Traditionally, when having festivities and offering banquets, both the wealthy and ordinary families would hire famous storytellers or ballad singers to perform at their residences for an whole day. Performers would receive three to five coin up to one to two taels of silver at most.

The rogues were also attracted to Yangzhou storytelling. According to Lin Sumen, half the audience members in the story house were the poor and rogues. Lin recorded this phenomenon in the *Hanjiang sanbai yin* as follows:219

Rent a vacant room and hire two or three workers. Put a desk in the room as a stage. Performers can sing or talk on stage. More than half of the audiences are the poor and rogues, they sit on long benches around the stage and listen to the performer attentively.

In the late Qing era, wealthy Yangzhou salt merchants disappeared fast from the Yangzhou story houses due to their loss of monopolies in selling and purchasing salt across the empire at high profitable prices. Ordinary people of the Lixiahe area and southern Jiangsu played an increasingly important role in the development of Yangzhou storytelling. The famous storyteller Gong Wuting of the Pu School, Deng Guangdou and Li Guohui 李国辉 (fl.1850) were among the most influential storytellers of Yangzhou storytelling of the time. In the late Qing period, many

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storytellers left Yangzhou for nearby cities to make a living. Owing to the reformation of the salt management system implemented by the imperial court, the replacement of sea transportation by inland waterways, and the chaos and destruction caused by the Heavenly Kingdom Rebellion, Yangzhou lost its economic status it had enjoyed for centuries since the Tang dynasty. As a result, the wealthy merchants moved to the Lixiahe area along with their fortunes. Folk arts, including various genres of oral performing arts, were significantly affected. Owing to its simple performance requirements, Yangzhou storytelling had a better fate compared to the other genres. A small desk, a talking-stopper, and a folding fan were adequate for a storyteller to perform. Besides, the storyteller did not charge the audiences heavily. Thus, ordinary people could afford to enjoy storytelling as their daily entertainment. At this time, the audience members of Yangzhou storytelling increasingly comprised residents living in Yangzhou and the Lixiahe area, including those from Yangzhou, Yanfu, Taizhou, and Dongtai. As the audience increased, so did the storytellers. In the Xianfeng era, the number of Yangzhou storytellers reached more than 300. In the Tongzhi and Guangxu eras, Yangzhou storytelling performance also enjoyed popularity in Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Shanghai, and north-eastern Anhui.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the financial centre of China moved to the Jiangnan area south of the Yangtze River. As a result, most of the Yangzhou storytelling performers migrated to Shanghai and Nanjing to seek a better life. In 1933, master storyteller Wang Shaotang made his first performance in Shanghai, which

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220 Ke, Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue, 320; Sun Fulong 孫龍父, “Yangzhou pinghua de lishi” 扬州评话的历史 (“The History of Yangzhou Pinghua”), in Song et al. (eds.) Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 331-32.
221 Ke, Minsu shiye zhong de Qingdai Yangzhou su wenxue, 320.
earned him a high reputation in Yangzhou storytelling. Contemporary famous storytellers include the Pu School storyteller Yu Shaochun, Wang Yutang 王玉堂 (fl.1911), Kang Guohua 康國華 (1853-1916), and Dai Shanzhang 戴善章 (1880-1938). In the Republican era (1912-1949), the audience of the Yangzhou storytelling mainly consisted of people from Yangzhou, Shanghai and residents from southern Jiangsu, including those from Zhenjiang and Nanjing. As Zhenjiang and Yangzhou face each other across the Yangtze River, they share a common culture and customs. Moreover, Yangzhou dialect and Zhenjiang dialect share many phonetic similarities.

During the Republican era, Zhenjiang was designated as the capital city of Jiangsu province. In this circumstance, Yangzhou storytelling performers preferred to perform in Zhenjiang. During this period, there were thirty-eight Yangzhou storytelling story houses at Zhenjiang. In 1938, the Japanese army occupied Yangzhou city. During the anti-Japanese war, there were only about forty storytellers in Yangzhou.

Yangzhou storytelling continued to be performed in the People’s Republic of China (1949-). Two members of the Pu School Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun, Wang Litang 王麗堂 (1940-), Li Xintang, and Hui Zhaolong 惠兆龍 (ca.1941-2011) were leading performers of Yangzhou storytelling. Since 1949, the majority of the audience of Yangzhou storytelling were Yangzhou locals. The new regime significantly contributed to the recovery of the Yangzhou storytelling industry. For example, in 1960, Yangzhou Oral Performing Art Company recruited a group of young

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222 Jia Zhenjin 賈振金, “Bamai Yangzhou pinghua shengtai jianshe” 把脈揚州文化生態建設 (“Feel the Pulse of the Ecological Construction of the Yangzhou Pinghua”), in Song et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 135.
223 Jia, “Bamai Yangzhou Pinghua shengtai jianshe”, in Song et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 135.
224 Jia, “Bamai Yangzhou Pinghua shengtai jianshe”, in Song et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji, 136.
storytellers and several story houses were set up in Yangzhou city. Before 1966, twenty-seven Yangzhou storytelling repertoires were transcribed into text.

As Yang Mingkun observes, Yangzhou storytelling is faced with the crisis of a disappearing audience.\(^{225}\) The current audience members are ageing rapidly and the younger generation is not too interested in Yangzhou storytelling. However, the repertoire of *Rogue Pi Wu* performed by Yang Mingkun is a notable exception. Currently, there are no more than twenty professional Yangzhou storytelling performers and only fifteen story houses in Yangzhou, most of their performances are free of charge. According to a 2015 survey conducted by a group of students from Yangzhou University, the average age of the audience of Yangzhou storytelling is fifty-five.\(^{226}\) My fieldwork on Yangzhou storytelling further substantiated this point: most of the audience members are in their sixties, seated with their grandchildren and nearly all of them are local inhabitants.

Based on the exploration above, I found that during the prosperous period in Qing Yangzhou, the wealthy played an important role in stimulating the development of Yangzhou storytelling among the diverse audience of Yangzhou storytelling. Most of the time, they wanted to show off their wealth and strengthen their relationship with court officials by organising performance parties and inviting well-known performers who were paid at a high price. In the nineteenth century when Yangzhou no longer enjoyed its “Golden Age,” ordinary residents in Yangzhou and neighbouring cities comprised the majority of the audience members of Yangzhou storytelling. The wealthy played a diminishing role compared to the Qing dynasty. With the support of

\(^{225}\) Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.

\(^{226}\) Ji, “shijian yishu shengming”, in Song et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji*, 14; Jia, “Bamai Yangzhou Pinghua shengtai jianshe”, in Song et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji*, 138.
ordinary people, Yangzhou storytelling continued to be performed into the twenty-first century. From 1949 onwards, the majority of the audience of Yangzhou storytelling were locals.

3.4 Conclusion

The performance space and props used by Yang Mingkun effectively contribute to the traditional register. The setting of Yang’s performance at Pi Wu Story House was set up based on the development of Yangzhou story house, the performance space designated for storytellers in the past and the change of audience during the development of Yangzhou storytelling. The Pi Wu Story House, the performance space of Yang Mingkun is decorated in a traditional Chinese style and the waiters are also dressed in a Qing style so as to reflect the history of Yangzhou story house that has become the regular commercial space specifically catered for Yangzhou storytellers since the early Qing dynasty. However, the composition of the audience and tradition of fee-charging for performance and the service served in the Pi Wu Story House differ from that of the story houses in the Qing era. Most of Yang’s audiences in the Pi Wu Story House are the locals of Yangzhou, as the residents living in Yangzhou has formed the bulk of the audience of Yangzhou pinghua performance since 1949. By contrast, the economic status of Yangzhou during the mid-Qing dynasty attracted a diverse audience to Yangzhou storytelling.
FOUR

Narrative Features in Yang Mingkun’s Performance

“I want to deliver a more comical story of Pi Wu to my audiences. Why does the audience want to listen to my story? They just want to be happy as they knew that the story of Pi Wu is funny through the earlier performance. Pi Wu is a rogue but a man of good nature in my story.”

This was the remark by Yang Mingkun when asked about his performance. In this chapter, I will examine whether he has achieved his narrative goals in unfolding the story and explore the degree of freedom or restriction in transmitting the inherited story of Pi Wu.

The three transcribed versions of the performance-style texts from the repertoires of Pu Lin, Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun vary in length but share a common storyline that revolves around the central character Pi Wu. Yang knows that most of his audience members are interested in the funny episodes of Pi Wu and sees the need for new explanations of past incidents and new comments on the events in the story. Thus, he is recreating the story. In this chapter, I will compare the continuity of the tradition between the three versions and explore the newly created narrative by Yang. I will also investigate why the modern audience effectively accepts the traditional story of Rogue Pi Wu. Firstly, I will explore the main plot shared by the three versions; I will then conduct a comparative literary analysis of the narrative emphasis of the three storytellers. Secondly, I will examine how Yang develops his version of the story by extending Pu’s and Yu’s narratives. By carrying out a comparative analysis of the narrative content of the three texts, I will highlight the

227 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
three main ways in which Yang extends the inherited story. Next, I will examine the characteristics of Pi Wu as presented in Yang’s version of the story, aiming to explore why the contemporary audience effectively accepts the characterisation of Pi Wu and the story. Finally, I will explain why Yang narrates the story of Pi Wu in a comical way without changing the main plot in Pu Lin’s version.

4.1 Preservation

*Rogue Pi Wu* was first created and performed in Yangzhou pinghua by Pu Lin in the Qing era. It has been performed over the past three centuries. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, only three transcribed versions of the story have survived: the Huaxuanzhai edition of *Pure-Wind Dyke* transcribed from Pu Lin’s repertoire, which was reprinted in 1996; *Rogue Pi Wu* from Yu Youchun’s repertoire, published in 1985; and *Rogue Pi Wu* from Yang Mingkun’s repertoire, published in 2015. The last two versions are derived from the first and much longer than the original.

I will compare the length of the three texts in terms of the number of characters and *hui* 回 (round) or narrative units (Table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>187,000</td>
<td>379,800</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Lengths of the three versions of the texts

As seen in the table above, the three texts show considerable differences in length in terms of the number of characters and narrative units. Yang and his master Yu might have extended and enriched the original story created by Pu. The length distinction between the three versions might be a result of publishing decisions. Due to developed publishing techniques, Yang Mingkun’s repertoire has been textualized in the
Yangzhou storytelling register, employing newly coined characters and the characters borrowed from Standard Chinese (see Chapter 6.1). As Bender discussed in his work, “If all of the repetitions, asides, anecdotes, songs, and elaborations on the plot in the long-story form were included, the length of the written texts would expand tremendously.”\textsuperscript{228} The truth of the text transferred from Yang’s repertoire is much longer than the other two versions. However, Pu’s and Yu’s repertoire might have been changed in many ways by editors in the textualization process due to contemporary publishing techniques (see Chapter 6.1). Thus, Pu’s and Yu’s repertoire might have been as long as or longer than Yang’s but later shortened for the convenience of publishing.

Yang Mingkun mentioned the term “the story road” (\textit{shu lu zi} 书路子), which was used among the Yangzhou storytellers and Suzhou storytellers to refer to the storyline of a repertoire. When storytellers choose a story to be unfolded in performance, they can enhance their performance experience by highlighting the imagery and extending the narrative on the story. However, they cannot stray too far away from the tradition. This is the restriction of the storyteller in transmitting the inherited repertoire\textsuperscript{229} What is the main story plot of the Pu School?

Regarding the main plot of the story, there is a clear line of succession between the stories in three versions. A close examination of the three transcribed texts indicates that the imagery of Pi Wu and the embedded court-case episode had been transferred from Pu Lin to the present-generation inheritor Yang Mingkun along with a number of episodes.

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\textsuperscript{228} Bender, \textit{Plum and Bamboo}, 71.

\textsuperscript{229} Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016; Bender, \textit{Plum and Bamboo}, 72-7.
As far as the transcribed text from Yang’s repertoire is concerned, the story begins with a court case and covers a main part of Pi Wu’s life while paying close attention to the daily lives of the ordinary folks of Yangzhou during the Qing dynasty. As mentioned earlier, Pi Wu is a rogue who is indulged in table gambling, frequents pawnbrokers and has a knavish personality. Yang’s narrative of Pi Wu is divided into five sections in terms of Pi’s life experiences: “marriage” (chengqin 成親), “impoverishment” (hunqiong 混窮), “celebration of the Spring Festival” (guonian 過年), “change of fortune for the better” (zhuanyun 轉運) and “reward and retribution” (shan e zhong you bao 善惡終有報). Each section consists of about twenty self-contained episodes, involving people from all walks of life such as butchers, shop owners, peddlers, merchants and court officials. Generally, the narrative unit in Yang’s repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu demonstrates itself as a self-contained episode. Yang’s narrative involves every aspect of social, cultural and religious life and events such as the End-of-Year (laba 臘八) Festival, wedding ceremonies, murder, bribery and table gambling. Each unit centres on a small subject and elaborates on traditional customs, business practices and family life of the residents who are form the bottom of the society. Characters such as Pi Wu, Ni Si, their wives and Mama Zhang make frequent appearances throughout the story and, in each new unit, new characters are introduced to the story centring on Pi Wu’s conduct.

The main plot in Pu’s and Yu’s transcribed texts mentioned above also has been examined. Based on the examination of the main plot in the story of Pi Wu in the three versions, I find that thirteen shared episodes encompass all the themes in the shared main plot (Table 4.2).
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sun Dali, who offers much help to Pi Wu, is killed by his wife Sun Qiangshi and stepson Sun Xiaoji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mama Zhang advises Sun Xiaogu to marry Pi Wu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pi Wu rents a room for the wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pi Wu gets a bed through trickery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pi Wu takes a bath before the wedding ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pi Wu prepares for the feast on the marriage day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pi Wu thinks of being an emperor when drunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pi Wu gets sticky rice cakes through trickery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pi Wu celebrates the Spring Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pi Wu is blessed with a big fortune by the spirit of a toilet lid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pi Wu buys a house with a big fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pi Wu opens a pawnshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lord Bao judges the murder case of Sun Dali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Shared episodes

The thirteen episodes, which constitute the main plot of the Pu School, has remained unchanged since its creation by Pu Lin. When talking about how a storyteller transmitted the tradition, the famous Suzhou chantefable performer Jin Shengbo 金聲伯 (1930-2017) said, “He changes the things that can be changed and does not touch the things that cannot be changed.”230 The thirteen episodes form the core narrative tradition of the Pu School because the Pu School members have performed but not altered it over the past nine generations.

The main plot of the Pu School is filled with dramatic twists and turns, indicating the relationships between the major characters Sun Dali, Sun Qianshi, Sun Xiaoji, Pi Wu, Sun Xiaogu and Mama Zhang through the narration of their daily life experiences. Hence, the story narrative feels close to the everyday life of the ordinary folks and making it more appealing to the audience. Ten of the thirteen episodes centre on the knavish conduct of Pi Wu and two other episodes on the murder committed by Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji.

230 Quoted in Bender, Plum and Bamboo, 76.
Episodes 1 and 13 focus on a court case. Considering that the traditional mode of transmission of Yangzhou pinghua is through word-of-mouth from the master to the apprentice, the three transcripts show that the storytellers of Pu’s school have preserved the court case theme for over three centuries. Otherwise, it would be impossible to identify the court case story frame in Yang’s version initially created by Pu Lin. In the court case, Sun Dali, the father of Sun Xiaogu, is murdered by his new wife Sun Qiangshi and his stepson Sun Xiaoji, as the duo fear their adultery will be exposed. Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji throw Sun Dali’s body into a well in the kitchen and then cover the well by building a cooking stove over it. They think that their crime will go undiscovered forever. Sun Xiaogu’s intuition leads her to suspect that her stepmother and stepbrother play a role in her father’s sudden death.

The court case narrative is not concerned with the process of investigation but merely presents the initial and final part of the case. Each of the three texts begins with the evil crime of Sun Qiangshi and Sun Xiaoji killing Sun Dali. A few days after the murder, Sun Qiangshi asks the matchmaker Mama Zhang to arrange the marriage of Sun Xiaogu, the only daughter of Sun Dali, to a villain, intending to kill her. However, Mama Zhang suggests that Pi Wu marry Xiaogu in order to save her. Episode 2 explains Zhang’s plan in detail. In Mama Zhang’s mind, Pi Wu is a rogue but a man of good character. In the subsequent episodes, the murder case is never mentioned. It is not until the end of the story that the case is mentioned again, centring on the trial by Judge Bao. The court case is not the most important part of the story but, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is necessary to express a pedagogical message as it helps to deliver the Chinese moral idea that “the evil is punished with evil.”

As outlined in Episodes 3-10, Pi Wu has been portrayed him as a rogue, indulging in gambling and frequenting pawnbrokers. As Pi Wu frequents the
pawshops, pawning forms a part of his daily life. In each of the three texts, the narrative of his pawning is elaborated across the eight episodes. Episodes 3-6 narrate how Pi Wu prepares for his wedding ceremony by tricking others. Pi Wu tricks his honest neighbour and best friend Ni Si into renting a room for the wedding ceremony. In addition, he tricks the owner of a furniture store where he buys a new bed with a pack of iron instead of a few taels of silver. Before attending his wedding ceremony, he goes to a public bathhouse to wash off the dirt and steals the new suit of an unknown rich man who is enjoying his bath. His most scheming act is that he asks the honest Ni Si to invite people from the streets, both known and unknown to him, to attend his wedding feast so that he can collect as many cash gifts as possible. Pi Wu asks Ni Si to inform all the attendees that “three bowls of dishes are set for having cooked rice; nine bowls of dishes for drinking.”231 Pi Wu serves only three dishes and a large jar of wine at the feast; the dishes offered are merely salted vegetables, bean curd and sliced pork, and the wine is diluted with water.

Episodes 7-9 portray Pi Wu’s daily knavish behaviour after his marriage as well as the traditional customs of the Spring Festival in Yangzhou. One day, he drinks so much that he barely recognizes his wife, so he calls himself the “emperor” and kicks Sun Xiaogu who is opening the door to let him in. Sun Xiaogu feels so sad that she plans to hang herself from a tree by the river. Fortunately, she is saved by the ghost of her father. The next day, Pi Wu cheats the owner of a newly opened sticky rice cake shop and takes away the food without paying. Episode 9 narrates how Pi Wu spends the Spring Festival with his wife and friends. As usual, he plays tricks while pretending to buy a number of items. However, the narrative that covers the whole festival,

231 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 131.
including the End-of-the-Year Festival, becomes the most alluring part in this episode. Yang’s description of the traditional way of celebrating the Spring Festival in Yangzhou is very interesting and informative. In his narrative, the celebration of the Spring Festival in old times starts with a kind of rice congee with nuts (labā zhōu 八粥) and dried fruit eaten on the twenty-eighth day of the twelfth lunar month—and is followed by shopping for New Year food and items, ranging from Spring Festival couplets (chūnlián 春聯) and New Year pictures (niánhuā 年畫) to nuts, dried fruits, snacks and tea foods, which will last until the first day of the Lunar New Year. For example, the ingredients of labā congee are detailed below:232

For the ingredients, the quality of the labā congee is divided into three levels. The first level consists of expensive ingredients like longan, dates, peanut, white agaric, gingko, chestnut and rice; the second consists of dates, peanut, soybean, a small quantity of gingko nut and chestnut; the third consists of sweet potato, carrot, green vegetables’ roots and small dates.

On the Laba Festival, the eighth day of the twelfth month, the street is crowded as people flock to the Dongyue Temple with their empty bowls and pots. Anyone with chopsticks who is inside the temple can enjoy the labā congee for free.

Immediately following the End-of-Year Festival, on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month, people offer sacrifices to Chenghuáng 城隍, the City God. The narrative of this event reads as follows:233

232 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 317.
233 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 560.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Pi Wu sees many people running to the City God Temple with their baskets; in the basket, there is incense and yellow bags bearing the phrase, “pilgrim to the mountain to offer incense to the gods” (chao shan jin xiang 朝山進香). Pi Wu is reminded to offer incense to the City God on that day.

Yangzhou people used to sacrifice to the Kitchen God (zaoshen 灶神) or songzao 送灶 seven days ahead of the Spring Festival. Traditionally, zaofan 灶饭 (literally “kitchen rice”) and zaotang 灶糖 (literally “kitchen sugar”) are necessary offerings made to the Kitchen God. The description of zaotang is given below:234

Pi Wu buys a zaotang shaped in five sugar layers with green and red flowers on it, which is inexpensive. The best zaotang has thirteen sugar layers with gold flowers on it and it looks like a golden pagoda. When holding the cheap zaotang, Pi Wu sees a person holding the best one coming towards him. He says to himself, “How beautiful his zaotang is! Mine is ugly! Let me change them, his zaotang shall be mine and mine will go to him.”

Episodes 2, 10 and 11 narrate how Pi Wu is rewarded for his good deeds. The Chinese belief in “the good is rewarded with good” (hao you hao bao 好有好報) is well presented through the narrative of Pi Wu’s change to good conduct. Pi Wu is a rogue but kind-hearted by nature. He never cheats the poor but instead helps them by playing tricks on the rich. After the matchmaker Mama Zhang tells Pi Wu the truth about Sun Dali’s death and his daughter’s dangerous situation at home, Pi Wu agrees

234 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 433.
to marry Sun Dali’s daughter to save her from her stepmother and stepbrother. Pi Wu and Sun Xiaogu experience many hardships during the course of their lives before their marriage, but they are blessed by a mysterious power and eventually enjoy a good life. Blessed by the spirit of the toilet lid and Heaven, Pi Wu wins a large fortune. He buys a large house at a low price because the house is said to be haunted. Later in this house, Pi Wu accidentally discovers a vast fortune buried in the yard under the guidance of a wild spark.

Although the legal case and the characteristics of Pi Wu are observed in the three transcribed texts, the extent of the narratives of the court case, Pi Wu’s pawning and table gambling, and his knavish behaviour differs considerably. As indicated in Table 4.3, 26% of Pu’s narration concerns the court case and only 6.3% concerns Pi Wu’s pawning conduct. In contrast to Pu and Yang, Yu is more concerned with Pi Wu’s knavish behaviour. Almost half of Yang’s narration deals with the daily life experiences of Yangzhou residents and 32.4% with Pi Wu’s knavish conduct. Compared to Pu’s narration, Yang’s and Yu’s narrations of the court case drop to 5.2% and 11.9%, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Court case</th>
<th>Pawning</th>
<th>Gambling</th>
<th>Knavish behaviour</th>
<th>Daily life experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pu’s Pure-Wind Dyke</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu’s Rogue Pi Wu</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang’s Rogue Pi Wu</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Proportion of subject matter in the Pi Wu narrative

As demonstrated in Table 4.3, the three storytellers have different emphases with regard to the subject matter in the narrative. Both Yu and Yang focus on narrating the knavish behaviour of Pi Wu and daily life experiences in Yangzhou, while in the original creation, Pu primarily focuses on the gambling, the court case and the knavish
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

behaviour. In the transcribed texts by Yu and Yang, the narrative centres on the funny incidents in Pi Wu’s daily life as well as his knavishness. Subsequently, the story Pure-Wind Dyke was re-titled Rogue Pi Wu in 1985 during the generation of Yu Youchun.

The main plot is made up of thirteen episodes and the embedded court-case story, which is shared by all three versions of the story of Pi Wu and lies at the core of the narrative of Rogue Pi Wu recited by Yang Mingkun. Although they share a common plot, the three versions are distinct in narrative emphasis.

4.2 Enrichment through Addition and Reduction

According to David Rubin, the oral performance includes unfolding a story reinforced by the story line, and the details of the imagery and what they conjure also play an important role in organising the story material. 235 The performance by Yang Mingkun presents a good example to illustrate Rubin’s theory in unfolding his story.

As shown in Table 4.1, compared to the 100 units in the text transcribed from Yang’s repertoire, Pu only has 32 and Yu 42. Yang stated in an interview in 2016, “I prefer to tell a comic story of Pi Wu to the contemporary audiences. In re-creating the story of Pi Wu, I focus on portraying the distinct features of individuals through their speech and behaviours.”236 In the following section, I will examine how Yang arranges his narrative in 100 units and how he deals with the narrative of the event shared by the three versions.

A close reading of the three versions shows that the units in Yang’s version mainly deals with Pi Wu’s knavish conduct. Yang’s narrative innovation is shown in


236 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 31 July 2016.
his skilful weaving of the otherwise loosely connected episodes by focusing on the protagonist Pi Wu. When telling the story of Pi Wu, Yang adopts a conventional plot-orientated structure with Pi Wu as the main character. Clearly, Pi Wu plays a pivotal role in the overall structure of the narrative, which allows the addition or deletion of an episode or unit without affecting the main plot shared by the three versions of the story of Pi Wu. This narrative strategy has enabled Yang to use his imaginations freely to enrich and renew their repertoires without changing the original style and plotline.

The story in Yang Mingkun’s version has developed into a comical biography of Pi Wu. The funny and knavish behaviours of Pi Wu and other figures in the story are more vividly portrayed in Yang’s story compared to those of the other two storytellers. Yang omits all the parts that do not focus on Pi Wu and adds new funny texts about him, developing the original story into a biography of Pi Wu. For example, the episodes in Units 1-2 by Pu, as well as Unit 6 by Yu, in which Pu and Yu introduce the family of Sun Dali and the murder case at his house in detail, are absent from Yang’s story. Not only does Yang omit some elements, he extends the other parts in order to create a comical narrative of Pi Wu. For example, the narrative in Units 93 and 94 focuses on the knavishness of Pi Wu, which is absent from both Pu’s and Yu’s versions.

Furthermore, Yang develops in two ways the facetiousness that already existed in Pu’s and Yu’s texts in two ways. First, he extends the narrative of the comical characters. As shown in Table 4.4, Unit 32 in Yu’s text is separated into Units 74-75 in Yang’s version; Unit 21 in Yu’s version is separated by Yang into Units 53-54 and 58; Unit 13 in Pu’s version is divided into Units 13-24. In these extended units, comical characters involved in the story are sophisticated, depicted by Yang through their talking, appearance and daily life experiences. Second, he rearranges the comical
presentation in Pu’s and Yu’s versions, extending the narrative of the funny incidents. Units 35-38 in Yang’s version develop from Units 14-15 in Yu’s version as well as Units 16-17 in Pu’s. The narrative of Units 16-23 in Yu’s version develops into 13 independent units in Yang’s version, ranging from Unit 35 to Unit 62. In these extended units, Yang does not focus on elaborating the characters involved but on rearranging the original chronological order of the funny incidents that already existed in Pu’s and Yu’s versions. Meanwhile, his narrative emphasis shifts from the details of the characters to how and why the funny incidents occur. Hence, the distribution of the comical presentation in Yang’s performance is more balanced than the other two versions.

To understand the differences in the narrative arrangements between the three storytellers, I compare the narratives in each unit of the three texts as illustrated in Table 4.4 (S: Share; PS: Partly share; A: Absent; the number attached to S and PS indicates the unit in which the shared narrative occurs in Pu’s and Yu’s versions).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yang Mingkun, Rogue Pi Wu, 2015</th>
<th>Pu Lin, Pure-Wind Dyke, ca. 1711-ca.1799</th>
<th>Yu Youchun, Rogue Pi Wu, 1985</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Foresee ill omens through face reading” (Xiangmian de xionghao 相面得凶兆)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Midnight murder” (Sangming sangengtian 喪命三更天)</td>
<td>PS-7</td>
<td>PS-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “Getting a bad son-in-law at the price of one hundred taels of silver” (Baiyin de exu 百銀得惡婿)</td>
<td>S-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “Pi Wu’s family background” (Pi Wu de shenshi 皮五的身世)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “Swindling two hundred coins at one time” (Yi’er baiwén 一訛二百文)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “Benefactor Sun Dali” (Enren Sun Dali 恩人孫大理)</td>
<td>PS-11</td>
<td>PS-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “Mama Zhang goes matchmaking” (Zhangmama quanhun 張媽媽勸婚)</td>
<td>PS-17</td>
<td>S-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. “Renting a wedding room at the Eastern Gate” (Dongmen zu hufang 東門租婚房)</td>
<td>S-12</td>
<td>S-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. “Losing all the silver taels in gambling” (Shuguang nangzhong yin 輸光囊中銀)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. “Getting a bed through trickery” (Qianyan p’ian bengchuang 巧言騙繃床)</td>
<td>PS-12</td>
<td>PS-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. “Passing off metal scraps as silver” (Tieshi chongyinzi 鐵屎充銀子)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

| 12. | “Cheating Ni San by pretending to be a pig” (Zhuangzhu pian nisan 裝豬騙倪三) | A | S-5 |
| 13. | “Taking a free bath” (Xiba baida zao 洗把大澡) | | |
| 14. | “Creating a great commotion at the Baiyu Bathhouse” (Danao Baiyu Tang 大鬧白玉堂) | PS-6 |
| 15. | “The unlucky Aunt Wang” (Wangdasao daomei 王大嫂倒楣) | | |
| 16. | “Announcing the wedding news through invitation cards” (Xitie baoxishi 喜帖報婚事) | S-7 |
| 17. | “Preparing the wedding feast with limited funds” (Qiongchou xijiuyan 窮籌喜酒宴) | S-8 |
| 18. | “Collecting favour on the streets” (Yanjie shou renqing 沿街收人情) | | |
| 19. | “Lying about the dishes” (Dahua kongtoucai 大話空頭菜) | S-9 |
| 20. | “Enjoying preserved vegetables despite poverty” (Kule qiong suancai 苦樂窮酸菜) | | |
| 21. | “Mama Zhang lies to Sun” (Zhangmama pianjia 張媽媽騙嫁) | S-10 |
| 22. | “Sun Xiaogu sits on a sedan chair” (Sun Xiaogu zuojiao 孫孝姑坐轎) | | |
| 23. | “Two rogues misbehave” (Liang hunzi shuangheng 兩混子耍橫) | | |
| 24. | “The sedan chair runs into a coffin” (Huajiao yu guancai 花轎遇棺材) | | |
| 25. | “The wedding night” (Dongfang huazhu ye 洞房花住夜) | PS-10 |
| 26. | “Mama Zhang comforts Xiaoqu” (Zhangmama quan Xiaogu 張媽媽勸孝姑) | | |
| 27. | “The heart turns colder than the bitter winter” (Xin bi yandong han 心比嚴冬寒) | PS-11 |
| 28. | “Loneliness and the cold attitude of the newlyweds” (Xinhun jimo leng 新婚寂寞冷) | | |
| 29. | “The night watchman rescues Xiaoqu” (Gengfu jiu Xiaogu 更夫救孝姑) | | |
| 30. | “Providing timely help” (Xuezhong song wennuan 雪中送溫暖) | | |
| 31. | “The fragrant and delicious sticky rice cakes” (Fentuan xiang you tian 粉團香又甜) | S-12 |
| 32. | “Cheating Boss Wang” (Wang laoban beirao 王老闆被繞) | | |
| 33. | “Disturbance in the moment of calm” (Wushiqi fengbo 無事起風波) | | |
| 34. | “Asking for business advice” (Taojiao shengyi jing 討教生意經) | A |
| 35. | “Getting vegetables through trickery” (Zhade yidiancai 詐得一點菜) | PS-14 |
| 36. | “Rogue Pi Wu sells the vegetables” (Pi Wu lai maicai 皮五來賣菜) | | |
| 37. | “Coming across an elderly woman” (Yujian nü nainai 遇見女奶奶) | PS-15 |
| 38. | “Asking for money by faking death” (Zhuangsi tao yaoqian 裝死討藥錢) | PS-17 |
| 39. | “First-class laba congee” (Toudeng Laba zhou 头等臘八粥) | A | S-17 |
| 40. | “Looking for ointment in a medicine shop” (Yaodian zhao gaoyao 藥店找藥膏) | A | A |
| 41. | “Half jin of longjin tea” (Banjin longjin cha 半斤龍井茶) | A | A |
42. “Helping an old woman through clever tactics” (Zhijiu laonainai 聪救老奶奶)
43. “Good and evil each have their way” (Zhengxie jie youdao 正邪皆有道)
44. “A shop assistant delivers rice” (Dianxiaoer songmi 店小二送米)
45. “Setting off firecrackers and selling firewood” (Fang paozhang maicai 放炮仗買菜)
46. “Temple fairs at the City God temple” (Cheng Huang miao xianghui 城隍廟香會)
47. “Competition with a Northerner” (Yu kuaizi jiaoliang 與侉子較量)
48. “Telling news thoughtlessly” (Xinkou shuoxinwen 信口說新聞)
49. “Running away with a pair of shoes” (Paochu yishuang xie 跑出一雙鞋)
50. “Young wife sits on the dinner table” (Xiaoxifu shangzhuo 小媳婦上桌)
51. “No money to shop for New Year goodies” (Wuben ban nianhuo 無本辦年貨)
52. “Writing couplets for fun” (Douqu xie chunlian 逗趣寫春聯)
53. “Obtain malt sugar thrice by trickery” (San e zaoertang 三訛灶兒糖)
54. “The Kitchen God ascends to Heaven” (Zaolaoye shangtian 灶老爺上天)
55. “Sun Xiaoji plays dirty tricks” (Sun Xiaoji shuajian 孫孝繼耍奸)
56. “Mao Delong comes to the rescue” (Mao Derong dajiu 毛德龍搭救)
57. “Commotion at the Wuyun Pawnshop” (Huonao Wuyun Zhai 活鬧伍雲齋)
58. “Buying tea snacks on credit” (Shezhang mai chashi 賒帳買茶食)
59. “Butcher rogue Zhang San” (Tufu Zhang San la 屠夫張三辣)
60. “Going all the way to buy pork” (Ping laoming darou 拼老命打肉)
61. “Saving two people at the same time” (Yi jiu liangtiao ming 一救兩條命)
62. “Pawning a living treasure through trickery” (Sheji dang huobao 設計當活寶)
63. “Spending the end of the year with joy and sorrow” (Beixi guo nianguan 悲喜過年關)
64. “Distributing money to the poor” (Saqian jin qiongren 撒錢救窮人)
65. “Playing dead at the City God temple” (Cheng Huang miao zhuangsi 城隍廟裝死)
66. “Committing suicide on the first day of the New Year” (Chuyi xun duanjian 初一尋短見)
67. “Pawning a toilet lid for money” (Ya mágái jiéqian 壓馬蓋借錢)
68. “Fortune has changed for the better in the gambling house” (Duchang zhuang baoyun 賭場轉好運)
69. “Pretending to be a rich man” (Jiachong da caizhu 假充大財主)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>“Tricking four robbers at the gambling game” (Zhadu si qiangdao)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>“Stealing Pure-Wind Dyke at night” (Yedao Qing Feng zha)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>“Sun Xiaoji reports a case” (Sun Xiaoji baoan)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>“Persuading gangsters to take the right path” (Quan fei zou zhengdao)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>“Changing to be an upright man” (Gatuo zhouchengren)</td>
<td>S-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>“Taking initiative to pay debt” (Zhudong huan jiuzhai)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>“Pan Caichen organises a gambling party” (Pan Caichen yaodu)</td>
<td>PS-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>“Hard to quit gambling” (Dayin heng nanju)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td>“Inviting a big boss thrice” (San qing da laoban)</td>
<td>PS-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.</td>
<td>“Pretending to be special guest from Guangdong” (Zhuang Guangdong teke)</td>
<td>PS-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.</td>
<td>“Eight rogues gather for gambling” (Baman judu)</td>
<td>PS-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81.</td>
<td>“Pan Er counts the gambling debts” (Pan Er suanzhang)</td>
<td>PS-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82.</td>
<td>“Selling the “demon house” (Maile yaoyuai fang)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.</td>
<td>“Tidying up the new house” (Shoushi xin fangzi)</td>
<td>S-35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.</td>
<td>“Rogue Pi Wu moves to a new house” (Pi Wu la banjia)</td>
<td>S-35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.</td>
<td>“The new house is haunted by a demon” (Gongguan you yaoguai)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>“Chance discovery of a large fortune” (Yiwai fa hengcai)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.</td>
<td>“A ghost haunts in Pan’s house” (Panjia nao huogui)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88.</td>
<td>“A dead fish comes back to life” (Siyu da fanshen)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.</td>
<td>“Hungry robbers cause trouble” (Jihuangzei hongshi)</td>
<td>PS-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.</td>
<td>“The toilet lid covers the dispute” (Matong gai fengbo)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.</td>
<td>“Rogues cause trouble at a pawn shop” (Lanshi naodangpu)</td>
<td>PS-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92.</td>
<td>“Madam Sun Qiangshi reunites with her relatives” (Sun Qiangshi renqin)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.</td>
<td>“Little Liuzi presents a treasure” (Xiao Liuzi xianbao)</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>94.</td>
<td>“Sun Qiangshi eavesdrops” (Sun Qiangshi ting qianggen)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95.</td>
<td>“The county magistrate sells Pi Wu’s criminal records” (Xianhauye maijie)</td>
<td>PS-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96.</td>
<td>“Imperial envoy Bao Longtu” (Qingchai Bao Longtu)</td>
<td>S-40-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.</td>
<td>“Throwing the secret code into the box” (Zhuangxiang tou anyu)</td>
<td>S-28-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98.</td>
<td>“Appreciating the view from a hall” (Mentang kanfengjing)</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th align="left">99. “Lord Bao deciphers the secret code” <em>(Baogong jie anyu 包公解暗語)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td align="left">100. “The good will be rewarded and the evil punished” <em>(Shan’e zhong youbao 善惡終有報)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Comparison of episodes in each unit

As shown in Table 4.4, Yang focuses on enriching the already existing narrative concerning Pi’s trickery when extending his story. For example, in Pu’s text, Episode 8 is presented as a comical episode as shown in Table 4.2, “Pi Wu gets sticky rice cakes through trickery.” The brief narrative in this episode is present in Pu’s transcribed text in around 700 Chinese characters. However, Yang expands the narrative into two units, i.e. Units 31 and 32. As indicated in the headnotes of Units 31 and 32 in Yang’s transcribed text, “Sticky rice cake is delicious and sweet” and “Pi cheats Boss Wang,” the two units elaborate on the different tastes of the sticky rice cakes in Wang’s shop as well as on how Pi Wu obtains the rice cakes from Wang by trickery. Yang’s narration of these two episodes has a length of 14,400 words. Unit 32 is dedicated to the process of Pi Wu cheating the Boss Wang; it is extended from the initial presentation by Yang through the inclusion of the dialogue between Pi Wu and Boss Wang and the description of the business environment in Wang’s shop. When narrating this episode, Pu merely focuses on depicting the characters’ appearance and conduct with no particular emphasis on the narrative. In contrast to Pu’s style, in the episode where Pi Wu plays tricks on Wang by making use of Wang’s family information, Yang emphasises and details the cheating process. For example, when explaining how Pi Wu intentionally repeats Boss Wang’s family information to deceive him, Yang applies the rhetoric of repetition in his narration. When listening to the repetition, the audience begins to think of Boss Wang and may even realise that Pi Wu is going to cheat Wang by repeating the information. Unlike Yang’s elaborated
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

narrative, Pu uses only one sentence to cover the lengthy dialogue: “Pi and Wang chat for a long time.”

Yang Mingkun deals with the original narrative in the story of Pi Wu in three ways and thus his narration furtherly meets the aesthetic effect li. I have chosen one event shared in the three versions of the story of Pi Wu, “The wedding ceremony of Pi Wu,” which is further broken down into several individual events as listed in chronological order in Table 4.5 (Italics: events shared by Pu, Yu and Yang; **: events shared by Yu and Yang). The narrative of the shared event exists in Units 13-29 in Yang’s transcribed text, in Units 6-11 in Yu’s text, and in Units 13 and 14 in Pu’s text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared episode: Wedding ceremony of Pi Wu</th>
<th>Pu (creator) events of Units 13–14</th>
<th>Yu (8th inheritor) events of Units 6–11</th>
<th>Yang (9th inheritor) events of Units 13–29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Pi announces the news of his forthcoming wedding and extorts from strangers the money and items necessary for the marriage.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Pi takes a bath and cut his hair before the marriage ceremony.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Pi and his guests enjoy the feast at his wedding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Mama Zhang comforts the bride Sun Xiaogu.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Pi thinks of himself as the emperor when drunk.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Sun Xiaogu intends to commit suicide when her father’s spirit comes to her rescue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Pi knocks over the bowl with soya bean milk in it. He obtains the soya bean milk for Sun Xiaogu through trickery.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Pi takes a bath and gets a new suit through trickery.</td>
<td>a. Pi takes a bath and gets a new suit through trickery.</td>
<td>a. Pi takes a bath and gets a new suit through trickery.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ni announces the news of Pi’s wedding.</td>
<td>b. Ni announces the news of Pi’s wedding.</td>
<td>b. Ni announces the news of Pi’s wedding.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Strangers offer items necessary for Pi’s wedding owing to his knavish behaviours.</td>
<td>c. Pi and Ni discuss the items needed for the wedding feast.</td>
<td>c. Pi and Ni discuss the items needed for the wedding feast.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**d. Pi brags about the dishes to be served at his wedding.</td>
<td>**e. Pi brags about the dishes to be served at his wedding.</td>
<td>**e. Pi brags about the dishes to be served at his wedding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. The poor enjoy the feast with a gang of rogues at Pi’s wedding.</td>
<td>**f. Mama Zhang persuades Sun Xiaogu to marry Pi and comforts her.</td>
<td>**f. Mama Zhang persuades Sun Xiaogu to marry Pi and comforts her.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**g. Two rogues stop Sun’s wedding sedan chair spitefully.</td>
<td>**h. Two rogues stop Sun’s wedding sedan chair spitefully.</td>
<td>**h. Two rogues stop Sun’s wedding sedan chair spitefully.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**i. Sun’s wedding sedan chair clashes with a funeral procession.</td>
<td>**i. Sun’s wedding sedan chair clashes with a funeral procession.</td>
<td>**i. Sun’s wedding sedan chair clashes with a funeral procession.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Pi thinks of himself as the emperor when drunk.</td>
<td>j. Pi thinks of himself as the emperor when drunk.</td>
<td>j. Pi thinks of himself as the emperor when drunk.</td>
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</tbody>
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237 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 50.
Table 4.5 Shared events

A comparison of the shared events in the three texts of the narrative shows three ways by which Yang extends his narration:

1. Providing a detailed depiction of everyday life experiences, such as a description of a daily scene, including the conversations and inner thoughts of the main characters;
2. Supplying new explanatory notes on an incident;
3. Giving new comments on an event or conduct.

As shown in the table above, Yang’s narrative of the event shared among the three versions is the longest comprising eleven incidents, while Pu’s is the shortest comprising seven incidents. The shared event of the “Wedding ceremony of Pi Wu” begins with “Announcing the news of Pi’s wedding” and ends with “Sun’s suicide attempt,” as shown in the italicised lines. Of the many incidents, only six are shared by all the three storytellers and four by Yu and Yang exclusively.

Yang’s narration on Pi Wu sounds more believable when compared with the other two versions. Incidents c, d and j are narrated by Yang. Events c and d developed from event c were provided by Yu. Yang extends the narration by elaborating on the daily lives and conversations between several ordinary people in the street. Yu narrates event c by describing how Pi Wu demands cash gifts from acquaintances and strangers he meets on the streets. In his narration, there is no dialogue between Pi Wu and the
other characters, only a description of the business atmosphere in the street. The description by Yu is as follows:238

Here is the best site on this street. Grand shops are situated on both sides of the street. People from all directions will pass through this street. […] All the pedestrians run away when they see Pi Wu sitting there.

Yu’s simple presentation is extended in Yang’s transcript through the dialogue of the pedestrians in the street. Yang’s presentation includes the daily conversations of Yangzhou residents as follows:239

“Ai 哎 (interjection)! Hehe 呵呵 (onomatopoeia for laughter)! You are …”

“Yes! You are right.”

“Did you come here to collect money for your boss?”

“Yes. My boss sends me here to collect money. It will not take long.”

“Enjoy morning tea here when you are back!”

“Sure!”

“Oh, Pi Wu is here!”

“Leave here!”

“Yiwei 呦喂 (interjection)!”

Everyone starts using code words when they see Pi Wu sitting at the gate of the city; they pout and glance at the gate, raise their arms to scratch the skin, and then shake hands with five straight fingers.

“Have you seen Pi Wu?”

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238 Wang et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 71.
239 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 137.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

“Ai!”

“Let’s change our schedule! Drink tea first and then go out of the city!”

How do code words work? The following presentation in the story explains this:240

While staring at his boss, the waiter gives out a code by scratching his face with his fingers and subsequently shows five fingers. Scratching the skin and showing the number five, the boss is secretly informed by the waiter that Pi Wu is coming.

Pi Wu’s surname is Pi, meaning “skin,” and his nickname is Wu meaning “five.” When scratching his face, the waiter sends out the information “skin” to his boss and the information “five” by showing five straight fingers. The waiter successfully communicates with his boss using hand signs.

As shown above, although Yang does not directly describe the busy scene on the streets as Yu does, he hints at it through the conversations between the unnamed characters. “Enjoy morning tea here” indicates that the dialogue takes place in a teahouse and “My boss sends me here to collect money” suggests that the business is located on the streets. The teahouse and the market must have attracted many people so the street would have been busy. The short sentence “leave here!” and “code words” used between pedestrians show that Pi Wu is considered a threat to others. The conversations and activities of the pedestrians on the streets not only suggest the ongoing commercial activities but also reflect the responses of the pedestrians on seeing Pi Wu.

240 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 249.
Yang is highly skilled at description. Take event g in Pu’s text for example, Pu Lin introduces in two lines the reason why Pi Wu plans to obtain two bowls of soybean milk for Sun Xiaogu and himself. Yu presents the dialogue between Pi Wu and Sun Xiaogu in no more than twelve lines. By contrast, Yang extends Yu’s dialogue to twenty-eight lines as follows (S: Sun Xiaogu; P: Pi Wu):241

S: “To eat? Eat what? We do not have water to drink.”
P: “Let me think about it! Yi 呀 (interjection), now, we have one thing to eat, what is it? The first pot of soybean milk at the bean curd store must be ready by now. Go to the store and get a bowl. It warms your hand and fills your stomach, and it quenches thirst, doesn’t it? Nainai 奶奶 [reference to his wife], do you like to drink soybean milk?”
S: “Soybean milk is good for the health and beauty. When I was a girl, my mother bought it for me every day.”
P: “Oh, do you like it?”
S: “Yes, I like it!”
P: “I will go out right now to bring a bowl for you.”
S: “Where do you want to go now?”
P: “There are many bean curd stores. Hahaha, the first pot of soybean milk must be ready by now.”
S: “You do not have money!”
P: “I do not need to pay for it. Nainai, you look down on me! Every bean curd store owes me money! I do not ask them to return the money, but only a bowl of soybean milk at their store. They should smile and give me a bowl. No problem, no problem.”
S: “Really?”

241 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 238-39.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

P: “Why would I boast?”
S: “Go to the store and bring me a bowl of soybean milk and a bowl of fire. I want to warm my socks by the fire.”
P: “Nainai, you really know how to enjoy happiness.”
S: “Pochinigegui 潑嗤你個鬼 (a form of interjection)! Enjoy happiness by living with you?”
P: “Oh, OK!”
S: “Take two big bowls from Ni Si!”
P: “I do not want to ask him to get up early!”
S: “We do not have big bowls!”
P: “Nainai, I have told you, they owe me money! I will use their bowls! No worries! Wait for me, I will come back soon!”

We can see that Yang’s extension is realised through elaborating on the details of daily encounters. In event j in Yang’s text, as well as event i in Yu’s and e in Pu’s, Pi Wu is drunk in a lamb-soup restaurant, so Yang presents the kitchen scene at the restaurant, and even the dishes served there:242

A chef is busy cooking in the steam kitchen. Pi-a-pa-de 掰啊啪的 (onomatopoeia of the sound of sizzling oil in the pot), it is very noisy. Not a single customer is found in this restaurant. Why is the chef busy cooking? What’s going on? The owner tells the truth. The chef pretends to be busy even though he has nothing to do. The busy scene in the kitchen is a living advertisement for the restaurant. It is the truth. The fire in the stove burns intensely as the chef stands nearby holding a spatula and a spoon. Kucha dang 窟嚓當 (onomatopoeia of the sound of a spatula crashing with a spoon),

242 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 219.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

_kuccha dangdang_. When the spatula is fire red, the chef pours cold water from a spoon onto the spatula. _Cha_ 嘰 (onomatopoeia of cold water making a hissing sound in contact with the hot spatula). Steam permeates the kitchen, giving the impression that the chef is very busy cooking. After going inside, Pi orders many dishes: lamb cake, cold sliced lamb, lamb’s heart and liver, grilled lamb, lamb soup, lamb meatball, and fried lamb’s gut. All the dishes are made with lamb, as this is a lamb soup restaurant. Apart from the dishes, two _jin_ of liquor are also served.

Pu and Yu do not provide as much detail as Yang does in his narrative; they only mention the restaurant where the lamb soup is served. In Yang’s narration, he first tells the audience of the situation in the kitchen from the viewpoint of the restaurant owner. Then, he describes the busy kitchen using three onomatopoeia: _pi-a-pa-de, kucha_ and _dang_; he also lists out most of the dishes on the menu to the audience. Indeed, Yang’s narration is based on a real scene in a restaurant in Yangzhou.

The explanation added by Yang contributes to the appeal of his narration. Apart from the detailed narrations of the daily life experiences in Yangzhou, Yang adds new explanations for dialect words or traditional customs in the story as the audience may not have the correct understanding of these. For example, in event g in Yang’s text, when talking of Mama Zhang discovering Sun Xiaogu weeping in the bedroom, Yang explains the dialect word _qi_ 泣 (weep) as follows:243

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243 Yin et al. (eds.), _Pi Wu lazi_, 163.
The girl [Sun Xiaogu] is weeping (qi) in her bedroom. Is she weeping (qi 吃)? What is she eating/weeping for? Is she weeping/eating in the afternoon or eating her dinner? Actually, the qi here means “weep” not “eat.” It is the qi in the word kuqi 哭泣 (cry). There are three kinds of ku 哭 (cry): ku 哭 (cry), qi (weep) and hao 喊 (wail). Qi refers to weeping tears silently; qi is an expression of utmost sadness.

Clearly, the pun results from qi 泣 (weep) being homophonous with qi 吃 (eat), and qi, ku and hao represent three types of crying in the Yangzhou dialect. However, ku has replaced qi in the modern Yangzhou dialect as ku expresses the lexical meaning of qi. Concerning qi, Yang explains this by comparing with another word chi or eat, as chi and qi share the same phonetic realisation in the Yangzhou dialect. With Yang’s explanation, the audience understands the meaning of qi, as well as distinguishing it from the homonym chi. However, Yu does not provide such an explanation.

It has become the distinct style of Yang to provide explanations of terms or behaviours in the story that are not familiar to contemporary audiences. In event i in Yang’s text, when talking about Zang Jia and Wai Jia carrying a sedan chair to collect Sun Xiaogu, Yang supplies a new explanation for the phrase “three steps up and three steps down,” as follows:245

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244 In the Mandarin Chinese, the word for “eat” is 吃 pronounced as [tʂʰ], but as [ʨʰɿ] in the Yangzhou dialect. The word for “weep” in the Mandarin Chinese is 泣 pronounced as [ʨʰɿ] in the Yangzhou dialect.

245 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 161.
The sedan chair acts as a tricycle or taxi of our time. The sedan carriers can move through the crowd and avoid running into pedestrians. Drivers can use the horn to warn them when driving. In the past, the street was narrow and crowded with men and women coming and going, some of them carry bulky items, some pushing a cart, some taking a basket or carrying baggage. In this circumstance, the sedan carrier in front has to alert the carrier at the back to be careful, as the back carrier cannot watch his steps due to the sedan chair before him.

With Yang’s explanation of the position of the two sedan carriers and the situation on the street, the audience can easily understand the reason why Zang Jia warns Wai Jia. Without Yang’s detailed explanation, the audience may be puzzled by Zang Jia’s verbal warning.

Yang also extends his repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu by providing an account of the historical development of the story of Pi Wu. In event f in Yang’s text, Yang introduces the origin of his repertoire and the relationship between his repertoire and that of Pu Lin. His interpretation is as follows:246

Pu Lin created his story Pure-Wind Dyke in the Qing dynasty but his story was set in the Song dynasty. It is said that Pu modelled the story on his own life experience in Yangzhou. He was born rich but indulged in gambling. Thus, he lost all his fortune and became a beggar. By chance, he became rich as before and lived a good life. As he lived in poverty for many years, he knew how the poor lived. He had a taste of both joy and suffering in life. He boasted of his

246 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 203.
Yang provides the interpretation above when explaining the historical tradition of pasting red double happiness (hong shuang xi 紅雙喜) on the windows in Pi Wu’s wedding room. He informs the audience that the tradition of pasting hong shuangxi originated no earlier than the Ming dynasty. However, at the very beginning of the story, the storyteller tells the audience that Pi Wu lived in the Song dynasty. In pointing out the anachronism in the narration, Yang speaks of the origin of his repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu. His explanation clarifies that the story of Pi Wu was created in the Qing era so that the audience is aware of the origin of Rogue Pi Wu.

A striking feature of Yangzhou pinghua is that storytellers often offer comments when telling a story in the performance. For example, as indicated in the headnote to Unit 86, “Chance discovery of a big fortune,” this story centres on Pi Wu obtaining a large fortune by chance in his backyard, guided by the fire at night. When talking of Pi’s experience of obtaining the large fortune at night, Yang gives his comment on the tradition as follows:248

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247 The word hongshuangxi refers to a piece of red paper cut in the shape of two Chinese graphs 喜 combined to make a compound ideograph 囍, meaning “double happiness.”

248 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 694.
by holding a knife and wandering in a dark place looking for a spark.

Of course, you can do what I said, but you may just see the spark of a cigarette. We cannot be rich in this way.

Yang not only tells the audience that what he says in his performance will not happen in real life but also emphasises the importance of being industrious. He reminds his audience that there is no such thing as “reaping without sowing.” This comment is close to heart and appeals to the audience.

From time to time, Yang also comments through the monologues of individual characters. For example, Mama Zhang has a long monologue after she suggests that Sun Qiangshi has permitted Pi Wu to marry her stepdaughter Sun Xiaogu. Her monologue is Yang’s comment on Mama Zhang’s plan. It reads as follows:249

I have something to say: You [Sun Qiangshi] the bad woman! You have the desire to make Sun Xiaogu poor and sad. You want Sun Xiaogu to freeze to death. However, I will treat her as my daughter. I will support her even if Pi Wu will not. […] Pi Wu is a rogue now but he will not be the same in the future. I believe he will become a better man. As the proverb goes, “Even cannon fodder has a moment of giving off heat” (paohui hai you ge fa re de shihou 炮灰還有個發熱的時候). As the folk saying goes, “A prodigal who returns is more precious than gold” (langzi huitou jinbuhuan 浪子回頭金不換). Pi Wu is poor now but he will not be poor all the time. As the folk saying goes, “three years on the eastern side of the river and three years on the western side of it” (sannian hedong zhuan hexi 三年河東三年河西). It refers to “dramatic changes taking place in a

249 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 17.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

person’s life.”). He should be rich in the future. Sun Qiangshi, you believe Sun Xiaogu will be poor. You are wrong in thinking like this.

Yang does not directly comment that Mama Zhang is a kind-hearted woman and that her plan is good in the long run. He expresses his attitude through Mama Zhang’s monologue. When listening to the presentation shown above, the audience understands that her plan is good in the long run, which may appear to be bad to Sun Xiaogu. Although Pi Wu is a rogue, Zhang believes he is a man of good character, and he will not be a poor rogue for the rest of his life. Moreover, only when Sun Xiaogu is married to Pi Wu, can be saved from the evil Sun Qiangshi.

In addition to extending the existing comical episodes, Yang has also created comical events that centre on Pi Wu. However, the narrative on the newly created events is no more than 2% of Yang’s entire narration. Unit 48 “Telling news thoughtlessly” and Unit 49 “Running away with a pair of shoes” narrate the comical event concerning Pi Wu, which, however, does not occur in either Pu’s version of the text of Pi Wu or Yu’s. I will discuss these two units in Chapter 6 as they are based on the two types of realisation of the word pao 跑 in the Yangzhou dialect. However, there are no more newly created comical events centring on Pi Wu in Yang’s repertoire.

The biggest difference between the three texts lies in the ending of the story. When I asked Yang whether he borrowed the episode from fiction or drama, he said he was inspired by the ending shared by fictional works created in the Ming and Qing dynasties.250 In Pu’s version, Pi Wu lives to eighty years old and has a big family with several grandsons. In Yu’s version, Pi Wu disappears immediately after the Emperor
commands his guards to arrest him. In Yang’s narrative, Pi Wu becomes a monk and
dies at 103 years old. Why does he arrange Pi Wu to become a monk? According to
Yang, the episode of the protagonist becoming a monk from the traditional Chinese
fiction created during the Ming and Qing dynasties is the source of inspiration for his
rewriting of the ending of the story of Pi Wu.\textsuperscript{251} The Qing novel \textit{Dream of the Red
Chamber} is an example.\textsuperscript{252} Jia Baoyu, one of the protagonists, eventually becomes a
monk after disappearing in the vast snow at the end of the novel. It is because Jia has
experienced the joys and sorrows of life to the full. In each of the three versions of the
story of Pi Wu, Pi Wu is born in a wealth family but lost his parents in his teenage
years. Later, he loses a big fortune in a gambling party organised by his father’s friends.
As a result, he becomes a rogue in shock poverty. Blessed by a mysterious power, he
is married with a nice girl and wins a big fortune in a gambling party and becomes
wealthy again. While he is enjoying the happiness brought about by his fortune, the
emperor orders to arrest him. In terms of life experience, the image of Pi Wu resembles
that of Jia Baoyu as their lives change radically. It is reasonable that Yang innovatively
lets his hero have the same final disposition as Jia Baoyu.

Yang Mingkun unfolds the main plot of the Pu School into a comical biography
of Pi Wu. Yang focuses on extending the comical episodes that already existed in the
two versions of performance-style texts based on Pu Lin’s and Yu Youchun’s
repertoires respectively. In Yang’s extended narrative, elaboration is given on the
scenes, items and characters, there are explanations of dialect words and traditions,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{251} Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 June 2019.
\textsuperscript{252} Chen Shihai 陳世海, “Yangzhou pinghua \textit{Pi Wu lazi} de gongxing jingyan yu gexingjiazhi" 揚州評話《皮五辣子}
的共性經驗與個性價值 ("General Experience and Individual Value for the Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu"),
in Song et al. (eds.), \textit{Pi Wu lazi bunwen ji}, 21.
\end{flushright}
comments on characters and events. These are all absent from Pu’s and Yu’s narrations. Hence, Yang’s narrative sounds more appealing to the contemporary audience.

4.3 The Narration of Pi Wu in Yang’s Story

For an oral performance to succeed, Rubin argues that concrete details make stories more accurate, thoughtful, and believable. Indeed in Yang’s version, the narration of Pi Wu becomes more concrete and the social relationships related to this protagonist becomes clearer. Hence, his repertoire is subsequently well received among the contemporary audiences.

As suggested by the title Rogue Pi Wu, Pi Wu is a rogue in the story narrated by Yang Mingkun. Although his story is full of comical presentation, it focuses on Pi Wu’s knavish conduct and the story is almost a biography of the rogue. The audience loves to listen to Yang’s story and is receptive to the narration of Pi Wu. The vivid portray of Pi Wu and the characters connected to Pi Wu in Yang’s story explains why contemporary audiences readily accept the story.

The description of Pi Wu reflected in the narrative recreated by Yang Mingkun is positive. The audience can also learn about the friendship and neighbourhood depicted through Pi Wu’s daily life experiences. Although known as a rogue, Pi Wu is portrayed by Yang Mingkun as a man with a good conscience. As discussed above, one of the three ways in which Yang extends his presentation is by providing a detailed depiction of everyday life, such as the description of conversations. Yang is skilled at shaping the image of Pi Wu through his conversations with others. For example, in Unit 7, “Mama Zhang goes matchmaking,” Mama Zhang asks Pi Wu to marry Sun

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253 Rubin, Memory in Oral Traditions: 55-6.
Xiaogu, the daughter of the court official Sun Dali. Pi Wu is a poor rogue who lives in a ruined temple and has no family or relatives. He finds it unbelievable that one day the daughter of a court official will become his wife. On hearing the news, he is not overjoyed but worries about Xiaogu’s future. Considering his present living situation, he says to Mama Zhang in a seriously and calm tone, “Mama Zhang, how can you come up with such a bad idea? Xiaogu must not be married to me. How can I support her when we get married? If she lives with me [on the streets], she will freeze or starve to death. For this, I owe a lot to my elder uncle Sun. *Wooo* (sounds of crying) …”\(^{254}\)

His response to Mama Zhang suggests that he is a thoughtful man. This conversation is absent from Pu Lin’s and Yu Youchun’s versions. Although Yu mentions that Pi Wu does not agree with Mama Zhang’s idea of the marriage to Xiaogu, he does not provide any conversations between Mama Zhang and Pi Wu to highlight that Pi Wu is a man of conscience. Thus, in contrast to the narration of Pi Wu in Pu’s and Yu’s versions, Pi Wu is presented as a man with a conscience through his conversations with Mama Zhang in Yang’s version.

Although he is known for his knavishness, Pi Wu never does bad things to poor or good people. As discussed above, Pi Wu is presented as a knavish rogue by Pu, Yu and Yang in their stories. As shown in Table 4.3, 32.4% of Yang’s narration and 42.9% of Yu’s include the knavish conduct of Pi Wu. In contrast, in Pu Lin’s version, 25.6% of Pu Lin’s version concerns this theme. Unlike Pu and Yu, Yang provides explanations as to why Pi Wu directs his knavish behaviour towards the rich and arrogant. He does not like rich people who are not merciful to the poor or the treacherous. Such people remind him of his father’s friends who take away his

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\(^{254}\) Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 47.
considerable fortune by deploying trickery at a gambling party and show no mercy. In addition, he looks down on the urban townspeople who are avaricious and arrogant. He is ready to perform tricks on these people to gain 200 wen, with the objective of seeking revenge and making fun of them. Thus, in Yang’s story, Pi Wu is presented as an upright man who only plays knavish tricks on the villains.

Yang also narrates the inner thoughts of Pi Wu. As discussed above, Yang creates new episodes to demonstrate Pi Wu’s knavish behaviour. For example, Unit 41 was added by Yang, which is absent from Pu’s and Yu’s versions. In Unit 41, “Half jin of Longjin tea,” Pi Wu disguises himself as Liu Shouzi to gain a half jin of Longjin tea by cheating at the Hong Yitai tea store. When he has successfully obtained the tea through trickery and ready to head home, he thinks of Liu Shouzi and is worried about him. Pi Wu says to himself, “Liu Shouzi is so poor. Can he afford the Longjin tea? What can he do if the boss of the store charges him a fee later? I do not want him to be brought to the court by the boss.” Eventually, Pi Wu goes back to the store and tells the truth to the owner. In this incident, Pi Wu cannot be regarded as an upright man, because he has used trickery on the tea store owner and Liu Shouzi. However, he is a man of conscience. Considering that Liu Shouzi is poor, Pi Wu decides to admit his trickery to the owner even though he has obtained the tea because he does not want to get poor Liu Shouzi into trouble. In Yang’s story, the incident in Unit 41 suggests that Pi Wu is a knavish rogue, but he will not direct his knavishness towards the poor.

Yang and Yu are devoted to portray Pi Wu as a swordsman in daily life but this is not the case in Pu’s version. In Yang’s and Yu’s versions, Pi Wu helps the poor to solve their problems by performing trickery. Taking Units 38, 42 and 50 in Yang’s

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255 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 335.
version for example, in Unit 38, “Asking for money by faking death,” Pi Wu pretends to be dying, lying on the ice-cold ground outside the bank on a winter night, aiming to obtain money by performing a trick on the boss. Jin Erpang, the boss of the bank, who used to be a friend of Pi Wu’s father and is one of those who take away Pi’s fortune through tricky gambling. As a form of revenge, Pi Wu performs tricks on him to gain three string (diao 吊) of coins to help a poor woman. In Unit 42, “Helping an elderly lady,” Pi Wu spreads a fake rumour of a fire outbreak one winter night and collects money from the bystanders through trickery. He collects money to help the homeless old lady. In Unit 50, Pi Wu disguises himself as the fifth uncle of a young lady whom he has never met before. He goes to the lady’s home and asks her father-in-law to arrange a wedding ceremony for the young lady and his son. In addition, Pi Wu asks the old man to treat the young lady as a female bodhisattva. As shown in Table 4.4, the event in Unit 38 is shared in the three versions, but the events in Units 42 and 50 are absent from Pu’s version. Although Yu narrates the two events, he does not provide any comment on the incidents, and he does not provide Pi Wu’s speech or inner thoughts in the same way as Yang. Thus, the role of Pi Wu as swordsman becomes more concrete in Yang’s version.

Yang provides an in-depth description of Pi Wu as a man merciful to the poor. In Unit 64, Pi Wu donates all of his limited money to the poor, even though he is not rich. In Unit 39, “First-class laba congee,” a poor boy breaks a bowl while waiting for laba congee at the gate of the Buddhist temple. His mother blames him and he cries sadly. Pi Wu says to himself upon witnessing the scene, “When I am rich, I will distribute laba congee to the poor every day. I will give them the top-quality thick laba
congee, not the diluted type.” Pi Wu becomes a generous philanthropist after he finds the large fortune. In Unit 90, Pi Wu says he will give every poor man ten taels of silver. In this way, they will be able to run a small business and lead a better life. In the events from these three units, Pi Wu shows mercy to the poor. As shown in Table 4.4, events in Units 39, 64 and 90 are shared in Yu’s version but absent from Pu’s. Thus, Pi Wu is identified as a man merciful to the poor in Yang’s and Yu’s. However, in Units 39 and 90, Yang arranges for Pi Wu to directly speak about his goodwill to the poor through Pi Wu’s monologue and conversations with the poor, as shown above. On the other hand, this is not the case in Yu’s version. As a result, Pi Wu appears more merciful in Yang’s version compared to that of Yu’s.

In Yang’s story, Pi Wu hates violent behaviour and robbery. For example, in Unit 74, Pi Wu persuades some robbers to give up their evil practice for good. The robbers broke into Pi Wu’s luxury house. When Pi Wu discovers them, he tries to persuade them. As shown in Table 4.4, this event is absent from Pu’s version but present in Yu’s. However, unlike Yang, Yu does not focus on describing the conversations between Pi Wu and the robbers. In Yang’s version, the manner Pi Wu speaks to the robbers suggests that he is indeed an upright man.

As shown above, Pi Wu is portrayed positively in the story. Although he lives by performing trickery on people who are not upright, he never hurt others through force. Moreover, he is always merciful to the poor and helps them by tricking the rich and arrogant. He even persuades the robbers to turn over a new leaf.

The portrayal by Yang Mingkun of the various types of relationships Pi Wu has with the characters have received positive responses as well. As shown in Table

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256 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 318.
257 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 728.
4.3, 47.5% of Yang’s narration centres on the daily life experiences of Yangzhou locals whereas only 33.3% of Yu’s narration and 9.6% of Pu’s centre on this theme. As will be elaborated below, there are three main types of relationships as presented through the characters’ daily life experiences. They are not identified in Pu’s version as Pu does not focus on narrating the daily life experiences of the Yangzhou people. The first two types are identified in Yu’s version but the last is absent.

Firstly, many married couples are involved in the story of Pi Wu, such as Pi Wu and Sun Xiaogu, and Ni Si and Si nainai. They care about each other and go through the ups and downs of life together. When Xiaogu has the desire to drink Longjin tea, Pi Wu goes all out to get it for her. In another case, Xiaogu wants to buy something special for the Spring festival and Pi Wu goes out to get for her too. When Pi Wu buys a dilapidated house, Xiaogu does not kick up a fuss but without hesitation immediately moves in with him even though she knows there is a risk of being killed by the monster living in the house.

Secondly, the relationship between Pi Wu and his friends fits the proverb “a friend in need is a friend indeed.” When Pi Wu is a poor rogue, he “bought” a room from Ni Si by cheating. Later, Ni Si discovers Pi Wu’s trickery but forgives him and lets him move in. This is because Ni Si does not want to delay Pi Wu’s wedding. Pi Wu is grateful, and he never forgets those who helped him previously, such as Ni Si, Mama Zhang and Xiao Liuzi. Mama Zhang saves Xiaogu from her stepmother by marrying her to Pi Wu. Also, she supports Xiaogu’s life in many other ways. Xiao Liuzi is a friend of Mama Zhang, and he saves her life by offering her his only return-of-the-soul pill (huanhun dan 還魂丹). When Pi Wu becomes a wealthy pawnbroker, he treats Ni Si, Mama Zhang and Xiao Liuzi as his family members and asks them to move to live with his family in his grand mansion.
Thirdly, the employers in Yang’s story are friendly and have good relationships with their employees. The young boss of the Hongyitai tea house treats his employees respectfully and in return, they show no hesitation in protecting his interests during crisis. For example, the grandfather of the young boss is arrogant. When he goes to the tea store, all the employees are patient with him. The boss of the Dafa rice store is kind to his temporary employees. When he is absent from the store, they continue to work hard and are praised by the customers. The workers respond and say, “The boss is kind. He provides breakfast for us, such as congee, steamed rice cakes and other types of dim sum. Yesterday, he provided soy sauce pork at lunch. We are happy with him. Although we are not full-time employees, we should do our best to help him.”

As shown above, the three types of relationships that exist in our daily lives today are presented in the story narrated by Yang Mingkun: husband and wife, friends, employer and employee. Through the daily life experiences of Pi Wu, Ni Si, Mama Zhang, Xiao Liuzi and other characters related to Pi Wu, have a positive attitude in life, which serves to motivate the contemporary audience.

Although Yang Mingkun continues the tradition of portraying Pi Wu as a rogue who displays knavish conduct, it appeals greatly to contemporary audiences due to the positive messages and the sense of integrity reflected in the character.

### 4.4 Conclusion

As a storyteller responsible for the transmission of the repertoire, Yang Mingkun preserves the storyline (shu lu zi) of the Pu School initially created by Pu Lin. The three themes associated with Pi Wu and the court case storyline in Pu’s story have

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258 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 357.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

been examined as the main plot shared with the other two transcribed texts of Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun.

As a contemporary storyteller, Yang recreates Pu’s story and develops into a biography of Pi Wu. Yang does not change the shared main plot inherited from his master but also does not ignore the requirements of the contemporary audiences. Thus, he recreates the story by enriching the funny episodes and creating new ones. Also, he omits details that are of no direct relevance to the story of Pi Wu. He elaborates on the funny incidents, gives explanations of dialect words and makes new comments on the figures and incidents in the story. All these elements contribute to the popularity of his storytelling among the audiences today.
FIVE

Phonetic and Syntactic Features of Yang Mingkun’s Performance Language

The language used by Yang Mingkun in reciting the story of Pi Wu is the Yangzhou dialect spoken in a traditional style. In this chapter, I will examine the conventionalized speaking register in Yang’s performance of the story of Pi Wu.

The Yangzhou dialect is used in Yangzhou storytelling. However, different Yangzhou pinghua storytellers have different speaking styles. Some of them apply the Yangzhou dialect throughout their performance, others prefer to adopt a few Northern phonetic realisations or pronounce words their own way. Yang Mingkun performs with the Yangzhou dialect that he learnt in the Pu School. This chapter aims to examine whether Yang has adopted Yangzhou dialect in his performances and analyse his performance diction from a historical-linguistic point of view. I will first outline the linguistic features of his performance language through phonetic and syntactic analysis. Secondly, using the commonly accepted phonological system of the Yangzhou dialect and the syntactic features of the Yangzhou dialect, I will illustrate that Yang’s performance language manifests itself as typical of the Yangzhou dialect in the traditional style, albeit with slight pronunciation adjustments. In the last section, based on Yang’s performance diction, I will look at the relationship between migration history and the development of the Yangzhou dialect to point out that his performance diction greatly contributes to the study of Yangzhou dialect. The data for phonetic and

259 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
syntactic analysis in this chapter are collected from the text *Rogue Pi Wu* transcribed from Yang Mingkun’s repertoire, the video recording of Yang’s performance of *Rogue Pi Wu*, and Yang’s live performances that I observed at Pi Wu Story House in April and July 2016. 260

### 5.1 Phonetic Features of Yang’s Performance Language

In this section, I will examine whether the phonetic features of Yang’s performance language match the Yangzhou dialect commonly used by the locals today. For Standard or Standard Chinese, the Beijing accent is regarded as the standard pronunciation and the Northern dialect as its basic dialect, while the standard grammatical rules are drawn from contemporary vernacular works.261 As the accent and phonetic realisation of the Beijing dialect is the phonetic foundation of Standard Chinese, I set the phonological system in Beijing dialect as the anchor to assess the phonological features of Yang’s performance language. During the process, I will conduct a comparative analysis of the Yangzhou dialect and Yang’s performance language. I ascribe Yang’s phonetic features to the following eight rules:

1. Retroflex initials zh- [tʂ-], ch- [tʂʰ-], sh- [ʂ-], and r- [ʐ-] are absent.
2. Dental-alveolar initials l- [l-] and n- [n-] are distributed according to the phonetic type of the following vowel.
3. Nasal ending -ng [-ŋ] in the compound finals -eng is realised as [-n]; -n [-n] in the -in is realised as [-ŋ].

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260 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi; Pi Wu lazi* (oral performance by Yang Mingkun), (Jiangsu Phoenix Electronic Audio and Video Publishing House, 2015).

261 Zhang, *Xinbian xiandai Hanyu*, 7.
4. Compound finals are realised as single finals; retroflex roll er [-ər] is realised as [a] without a retroflex trace.

5. MC entering tone is commonly realised.

6. Literary and colloquial reading and podu reading exist.

7. There is set abbreviated realisation of pluri-syllable words.

8. Realisation is clear and sonorous.

The retroflex initials zh-, ch-, sh- and dental-alveolar initials z-, c-, s- are six phonemes in the Beijing dialect, and they all perform the function of differentiating syllables. However, in Yang’s pronunciation, only z-, c- and s- are identified while zh-, ch-, sh- are absent (Table 5.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>知</th>
<th>紙</th>
<th>場</th>
<th>吃</th>
<th>師</th>
<th>是</th>
<th>子</th>
<th>次</th>
<th>嘴</th>
<th>絲</th>
<th>四</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pinyin syllable</td>
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<td>zhi</td>
<td>chang</td>
<td>chi</td>
<td>shi</td>
<td>shi</td>
<td>zao</td>
<td>zi</td>
<td>ci</td>
<td>zui</td>
<td>si</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing dialect</td>
<td>tʂ-</td>
<td>tʂ-</td>
<td>tʂ’-</td>
<td>s-</td>
<td>ʂ-</td>
<td>ʂ-</td>
<td>ts-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>s-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang’s realisation</td>
<td>ts-</td>
<td>ts-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>s-</td>
<td>s-</td>
<td>ts-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>ts’-</td>
<td>s-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Phonetic realisation of zh-, ch-, sh- and z-, c-, s-

Yang Mingkun realises the retroflex initials zh- [tʂ-], ch- [tʂ’-], sh- [ʂ-] of the Beijing dialect as the dental-alveolar initials z- [ts-], c- [ts’-], s- [s-] or alveolar-palatal initial q- [tʂ’-]. As a result, many homonyms exist in Yang’s diction, but not in the Beijing dialect. For example, 紫 zǐ and 紙 zhǐ are identically realised as [tʂʅ⁴] by Yang.

The distribution of the dental-alveolar initials l- [l-] and n- [n-] in Yang’s pronunciation differs from that of Beijing dialect. Børdahl pays close attention to the initials l- and n- when observing Wang Shaotang’s speaking styles but does not illustrate the distribution of n- and l- in detail. She argues that there is a “distinction between initials /l-/, /n-/ and /ɾ-/ in opposition to no such distinction, here called blurred
Audiences who are not familiar with the Yangzhou dialect but are familiar with Standard Chinese are usually confused with phonetic realisation [l-] when watching Yang’s performance. Also, they wrongly argue that in Yangzhou pinghua, r- [ʐ], l- [l-] and n- [n-] are allophonic variations of the phoneme [-l], as they cannot distinguish between syllables via the initials l-, n-, and r-. The view held by Margaret Mian Yan is that “Nanjing dialect merges Standard Chinese consonant initials n- with l- and realised both as [l-]” is not accurate. Instead, the distribution of the two initials in the Nanjing dialect is similar to that in Yangzhou dialect.

The distribution of the initials l- [l-] and n- [n-] in Yang’s realisation is as follows: First, when observing Yang’s pronunciation, I found that the phoneme [l-] is followed by the hongyin洪音 vowel (finals which contain “open” rhymes or “closed” rhymes); [n-] by the xiyin細音 vowel (finals which contain “rounded” rhymes or “aligned-teeth” rhymes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>牛</th>
<th>那</th>
<th>鲁</th>
<th>绿</th>
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<td>n-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yang’s realisation</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>l-</td>
<td>l-</td>
<td>n-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Phonetic realisation of n- and l-.

As shown in Table 5.2, the phoneme [n-] in Yang’s pronunciation is followed by hongyin finals which contain the “aligned-teeth” rhyme -i or “rounded” rhyme -ü. [l-], followed by xiyin finals including open rhyme -a or closed rhyme -u. The syllable lü绿 is an exception to this rule. It is realised as [ly] in the Beijing dialect and [Iε?] by

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263 Yan, Introduction to Chinese Dialectology, 72.
264 According to the shapes of mouth and lips when pronouncing, Chinese finals are divided to sihu 四呼 (four types): kaikou hu 開口呼 (“open” rhymes), i.e. a [a]; hekou hu 合口呼 (“closed” rhymes), i.e. u [u]; cuokou hu 結口呼 (“rounded” rhymes), i.e. ü [y]; and qichi hu 齒齒呼 (“aligned-teeth” rhymes), i.e. i [i].
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Yang; the initial l- was retained. It is because Yang changed the “rounded” rhyme [y] to the “open” rhyme [ɔʔ].

Secondly, in some cases, Yang realises initials r- [ʐ] and n- [n-] in the Beijing dialect as [l-]. The realisation of the retroflex initial r- [ʐ] undergoes an interesting change in Yang’s pronunciation. Take răn 染 and rĕn 忍 for example: the former r- [ʐ] in the Beijing dialect is absent in Yang’s realisation [i ẽ] of răn, whereas the latter changes into [l-] in [l ǝn] of rĕn (Table 5.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>然</th>
<th>冕</th>
<th>讓</th>
<th>人</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pinyin syllable</td>
<td>ran</td>
<td>ran</td>
<td>rang</td>
<td>ren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing dialect</td>
<td>ʐ</td>
<td>ʐ</td>
<td>ʐ</td>
<td>ʐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang’s realisation</td>
<td>ø (zero initial)</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>l-</td>
<td>l-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 Phonetic realisation of r-

In Yang’s realisation, the nasal ending -ng [-ŋ] in the compound final -eng is realised as [-n] or [-ŋ] conditionally. As shown in Table 5.4, -eng in leng, feng, and weng in Yang’s performance diction is realised as [-ŋ], [-oŋ] and [-oŋ], respectively, and -n and -ng in -in and -ing as [-ŋ] identically. Interestingly, all the three commonly used syllables lěng, rěn, and rěng are pronounced as [lǝn] in similar tone pitches by Yang.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>音</th>
<th>英</th>
<th>冷</th>
<th>風</th>
<th>翁</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pinyin syllable</td>
<td>yin</td>
<td>ying</td>
<td>leng</td>
<td>feng</td>
<td>weng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing dialect</td>
<td>-in</td>
<td>-iŋ</td>
<td>-oŋ</td>
<td>-oŋ</td>
<td>-ʊŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang’s realisation</td>
<td>-iŋ</td>
<td>-iŋ</td>
<td>-oŋ</td>
<td>-oŋ</td>
<td>-ʊŋ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Phonetic realisation of -ng and -n

Yang treats compound finals as a single in his diction. First, Yang treats the diphthong in compound finals as a monophthong instead. For example, gao 高 is realised as [kau] in the Beijing dialect, but as [kɔ] in Yang’s diction. Secondly, Yang changes the di-phone final into a mono-phone. The commonly used di-phone finals -an [אנ] are shortened to mono-phone [e] in Yang’s pronunciation. For instance, san 三 [san] in the Beijing dialect is pronounced as [sẽ] by Yang. Thirdly, the retroflex di-
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

phone final -er [-०r] is [a] in Yang’s diction. Wang Shaotang deals with -er in a different way; he pronounces it clearly as the di-phone [ar].

The MC entering tone has a short glottal ending sound attached to a syllable’s phonetic realisation, recorded as [ʔ]. It is regarded as a phonetic feature of the dialect and categorised with the fifth tone pitch. It commonly exists in Yang’s pronunciation. For instance, Yang reads he 鶴, pa 枢, zhuo 卓, xue 學, and le 楽 as [Xаʔ], [pаʔ], [tsuаʔ], [ciaʔ], and [laʔ], respectively. The MC entering tone is conditionally read by Wang Shaotang according to his personal speaking styles. Additionally, Wang’s and Yang’s entering tone realisation reflects the phonological development of the Yangzhou dialect in the last fifty years. For example, the syllable rou 肉 is pronounced as [Iɔʔʔ] by Wang in the traditional pronunciation, but as [I cougar] by Yang without the MC entering tone.

The literary (L) and colloquial (C) pronunciation and podu (P) pronunciation commonly exist in Yang’s diction. For example, Yang reads xia 下 as [cia] or [xa], the former is the literary pronunciation and the latter is colloquial. In Yang’s diction, sa 撒 is [sæʔʔ] or [sa] in Yang’s diction with the former as the original (O) pronunciation and the latter, podu. As a result, some syllables with two types of phonetic realisations exist in Yang’s diction but only one exists in the Beijing dialect (Table 5.5)

Language contact between the Northern and Southern dialects occurred in ancient China, as several waves of southward migration took place from the Western Jin dynasty onwards; As the phonetic evidence of language contact, LC pronunciation exists in many individual dialects. LC reading is a notable feature of the Northern Wu dialect.\(^{268}\) L pronunciation indicates a syllable read in the Northern dialect and C pronunciation, hin the Southern. As shown in Table 5.5, both \textit{jia} 家 and \textit{qu} 去 have LC pronunciation. The L reading [\textit{tɕia}] and [\textit{tɕˈy}] follows the Northern phonological system and they resemble the phonetic realisation [\textit{tɕia}] and [\textit{tɕˈy}] in Beijing dialect respectively. Their respective C reading [\textit{ka}] and [\textit{kˈi}] follows the Southern pattern and shows the difference in initial and final from the L reading.

The P pronunciation aims to distinguish different but related meanings of one syllable or two morphemes sharing a phonetic realisation, which is achieved by changing the tone, final, or initial. Basically, the O reading retains the manner of the Middle Chinese phonetic realisation, and P reading resembles the reading in Beijing dialect. As shown in Table 5.5 above, the O realisation of \textit{die} 疊, \textit{mo} 摸, \textit{liang} 兩, \textit{die} 爹 complies with Middle Chinese diction.\(^{269}\) To add a relative meaning to them, the P

\(^{268}\) Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed”, 534-6.

reading is produced. For instance, *die* 爹 means “father” in the O reading; it refers to “grandfather” in the P realisation, which sounds like the pronunciation in Beijing dialect. The word *die* 疊 is a measure word (MW) when realised as a P reading [tǐɛ], and becomes a verb in the O reading [tieʔ]. LC reading is identified in Wang’s pronunciation.270

The set abbreviated realisation of pluri-syllable words exists in Yang’s speech. For example, the word *mashang* 馬上 [ma ʂan] in the Beijing dialect is read as [maŋ] by Yang. The four-syllable phrase *zhe ge yang zi* 這個樣子 is realised as [kəŋ tʂɛ] by Yang and it is realised as [tʂɛ ke ian tʂʅ] in the Beijing dialect. Regarding the realisation of pluri-syllable phrases, the set abbreviation by Yang is not identified in the diction of Wang Shaotang. The commonly used set abbreviated realisations of disyllable words or phrases are given in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Set of abbreviated realisations of disyllable by Yang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>de  ya</th>
<th>zi  a</th>
<th>de  ai</th>
<th>gao   su</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>pinyin</em> syllable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing Dialect</td>
<td>tɔ  ia</td>
<td>tʂʅ  a</td>
<td>tɔ  ai</td>
<td>kau   su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang’s pronunciation</td>
<td>tia</td>
<td>tsa</td>
<td>tɛ</td>
<td>kɔŋ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These set abbreviations shown in Table 5.6 are only a few of those found in Yang’s diction. Yang adopts them in his performance in a high frequency as [tia], [tsa], and [tɛ] represent the sentence as an ending syllable.

The above eight rules of Yang’s phonetic realisation are attained through my personal observation of his pronunciation in performance. I will now compare the phonetic features of Yang’s performance language with that of the Yangzhou dialect. Before this comparative analysis is conducted, it is necessary to briefly introduce the

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phonological features of the Yangzhou dialect. First, the Yangzhou dialect is a subgroup of the Hongchao dialect group. The Hongchao group is one of the four subgroups of Jiang-Huai Mandarin. Jiang-Huai Mandarin belongs to Northern Mandarin. Undoubtedly, the phonological system in the Yangzhou dialect is close to that of Northern Mandarin. However, it also displays features of the Southern dialects. Secondly, the Yangzhou dialect spoken at present is different from that spoken fifty years ago or earlier and the main difference lies in the domain of phonetics.

The phonological system of the Yangzhou dialect consists of seventeen consonant initials with the zero initial, 47 finals, and 5 tones, including the MC entering tone (Table 5.7).²⁷²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials:</th>
<th>p p̑ m f t t̑ s te t̑ e k k̑ x Ø</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tones’ pitch:</td>
<td>1st tone 21; 2nd tone 34; 3rd tone 42; 4th tone 55; entering tone ʔ4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7 Phonological system of the Yangzhou dialect

Yang’s speaking rules 1-3 show that his phonetic features conform to the phonological system of Yangzhou dialect. In Yangzhou dialect, the retroflex initials zh- [tʂ-], ch- [ʈʂ’-], sh- [ʂ-] and r- [ʐ-] are absent as are the nasal endings -eng [-əŋ] and -in [-in]. The retroflex initial r- [ʐ-], nasal initial n- [n-] and lateral initial l- [l-] of the Beijing dialect are re-distributed in the Yangzhou dialect according to the following rules: The

²⁷¹ As final [m] can act as a syllable in the Yangzhou dialect, i.e. [m ma] 姆妈, it is controversial to include [m] in the initial group of the Yangzhou dialect. Here, I count it as an initial according to the grouping in the Li Rong 李榮, Wang Shihua and Huang Jilin, (eds.), Yangzhou fangyan cidian 揚州方言詞典 (Dictionary of the Yangzhou Dialect), (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996)

²⁷² Bao Mingwei 鮑明煒, Jiangsu sheng zhi fangyan zhi 江蘇省志方言志 (Gazetteer the Dialects within Jiangsu Province), (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1998) Since the 1950s, scholars have conducted research on the Yangzhou dialect concerning its phonological system, among which the Jiangsu sheng zhi fangyan zhi is an authority. The phonological system of the Yangzhou dialect presented in Jiangsu sheng zhi fangyan zhi is reckoned as the standard and frequently cited by scholars to support their argument. In the present study, I rely on it as well.
realisations [ʐ-] are absent but [l-] exists and phoneme [l-] embraces two allophonic variations of [l-] and [n-]. [l-] must be followed by a hongyin vowel and [n-] by xiyin. Initial r- [ʐ-] is realised as [l-], or zero initial. 273 At present, due to the influence of phonetic realisations in Standard Mandarin, the distribution of [ʐ-], [n-] and [l-] in the Yangzhou dialect is close to that of Standard Chinese. 274 Most of the modern Yangzhou dialect speakers are not over 40 years and they have learnt Standard Mandarin as their day-to-day language (Table 5.8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>拿</th>
<th>腻</th>
<th>熱</th>
<th>暖</th>
<th>冉</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pinyin syllable</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>ni</td>
<td>re</td>
<td>nuan</td>
<td>ran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Mandarin</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>ni</td>
<td>ʐə</td>
<td>nuan</td>
<td>ʐan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangzhou dialect</td>
<td>la</td>
<td>li</td>
<td>Ɂ</td>
<td>luo</td>
<td>Ɂe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Yangzhou dialect</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>ni</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>nuo</td>
<td>ran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8 Initial realisation [n-] and [l-]

In Table 5.8, the distribution of [n-] and [l-] in the modern Yangzhou dialect resembles that in Standard Mandarin. However, it is different from that of Yangzhou dialect. Tables 5.1-5.3 and 5.8 indicate that the distribution of the initials [ʐ-], [n-], and [l-] in Yang’s diction is identical to that in the Yangzhou dialect, but not in the present.

Yang’s phonetic rules 4-5 conform to the phonological system of the Yangzhou dialect. In his study of Yangzhou dialect, Wang Shihua argued that the compound diphthong or triphthong finals in Beijing dialect existed in Yangzhou dialect as monophthongs. 275 For example, [ei] of the Beijing dialect is realised as [i] in the Yangzhou dialect. Also, [i] has an allophonic variation [ii]. Yang Mingkun realised the diphthong in compound finals as monophthong as well.

275 Wang, “Yangzhouhua de sheng yun diao”,119; Wang, “Yangzhou yuyin de yixie bianhua”, 84.
Thirty compound finals exist in the phonological system of the Beijing dialect, of which 17 are diphthongs or triphthong finals (Table 5.9).

| Finals | i | u | y | ə | a | ia | iaı | ie | ye | Y | o | u | aı | uai | ou | iou | an | ən | in | uı | ən | ən | uı | əŋ | iŋ | uı | əŋ | iuı | uı | m |

Table 5.9 Finals in the Beijing dialect

By contrast, there are only nine diphthongs and triphthongs finals in the Yangzhou dialect (Table 5.7). All the diphthongs and triphthongs in the Beijing dialect exist in Yangzhou dialect as monophthongs and diphthongs. In addition, the syllable er [ar] of the Beijing dialect is read as [a] with no trace of retroflex ending. Yang Mingkun reads er as [a] without retroflex ending.

Yang’s phonetic rule 6 conforms to the phonetic features of the Yangzhou dialect, with a slight variation. In Yangzhou dialect, around 526 syllables are realised with the MC entering tone or the fifth tone. In the present Yangzhou dialect, five of the syllables have lost their entering tone completely and ten of them are bleaching, namely yi 易, yi 翼, hua 划, rou 肉, yu 玉, cuo 错, zuo 昨, ju 劇, shuai 率, and shuai 蝈. With the exception of the older generation, Yangzhou locals today do not realise the fifteen syllables with the entering tone. The other 511 syllables retain their entering tone realisation in the present dialect. Wang Shaotang realises all the ten syllables with an entering tone in his performance but Yang Mingkun does not. For example, 肉 and 玉 are pronounced as [lɔʔ] and [iɔʔ] in the Yangzhou dialect, but Yang pronounces them as [lɤu] and [y], without the entering tone. Yang explained the

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277 Lu, “Jin wushinian lai Yangzhou fangyan yuyin de bianhua yanjiu”, 24. Five syllables are la 拉, zha 柵, she 射, yi 憑 and jiao 犒.
difference, “I have changed a few traditional realisations into the contemporary, in case my audiences do not recognize them.”

The last two phonetic rules 7-8 of Yang’s performance language also comply with the phonetic features of Yangzhou dialect. The LC pronunciation and P reading commonly exist in Yangzhou dialect. The fifty-five syllables that have LC reading exist in Yangzhou dialect but three of them are lost in the C reading in contemporary Yangzhou dialect, namely hong 虹, kua 跨, and xie 懈. As discussed above, LC pronunciation is found in both Wang Shaotang’s and Yang Mingkun’s performance, even though Wang (1889-1968) and Yang (1949-) belong to two different generations. So far, there is only one study devoted to the P reading in Yangzhou dialect which argues that the syllables are realised as P reading. I find that Yang Mingkun realises nearly all these instances of P reading in his performance.

In the Yangzhou fangyan cidian, the set abbreviated realisation of the pluri-syllable words in the Yangzhou dialect is explained in detail. This phenomenon is recognized as one of the linguistic features of Yangzhou dialect. Many pronunciations are shortened in Yangzhou dialect. Native speakers cannot explain this scenario owing to the shortened realisations of the pluri-syllable as idiomatic usage. As indicated in Table 5.6, the set abbreviated realisation of the pluri-syllable words exists in Yang’s pronunciation.

Based on the comparison above, my argument is that Yang’s phonetic features conform to that of Yangzhou dialect with a slight variation.

279 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
280 Lu, “Jin wushinian lai Yangzhou fangyan yuyin de bianhua yanju”, 45-6; “Yangzhou kouyu zhong de podu”.
282 Wang, “Yangzhou kouyu zhong de podu”.
283 Li et al. (eds.), Yangzhou fangyan cidian, 17-8.
5.2 Syntactic Features of Yang’s Performance Language

I will now examine whether the syntactic features of Yang’s performance share common features with those of Yangzhou dialect, starting with the frequently used syllables -zi 子 and -tou 頭. They are mostly defined as “morphological productivity” Mandarin derivational suffixes by linguists in their studies focusing on contemporary Chinese morphology. -Zi is a nominal and weakly diminutive suffix and -tou is a dummy nominal.284 In Yang’s diction, they also act as a semantic marker when attached to a phrase.

In Yang’s diction, the suffix -zi attaches to the noun (N) and verb (V); -zi attaches to the noun che 車 and verb gai 蓋 to produce new nouns chezi 車子 and gaizi 蓋子. Also, -zi, acts as a semantic marker, attaching to the nominal phrase (NP), verbal phrase (VP), adjective phrase (AP), nun-measure phrase (NMP), and interrogative pronoun phrase (IPP). When the lexical meaning of -zi is not bleached, -zi gives the whole phrase the meaning of “diminutive” or “trifle.” When the lexical meaning of -zi is bleached, -zi acts as a dummy marker. Some examples are shown in Table 5.10 (√ denotes “existence” and “---,” “absence”). The adjective phrase pang dianr 胖點兒 means “a little chubby”; 胖點兒子 pang dianr zi means “only a little chubby,” as -zi reduces the degree of “a little”. The interrogative phrase duo wan 多晚 means “how late”, whereas duo wan zi 多晚子 means “what time exactly” as -zi has merged with duo wan to form a new phrase and it has lost its lexical meaning.

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The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>車子 che zi</th>
<th>胖點兒子 pang diann zi</th>
<th>蓋子 gai zi</th>
<th>送點兒子 song diann zi</th>
<th>兩圈子 liang quan zi</th>
<th>多晚子 duo wa nzi</th>
<th>絲絲子 si si zi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The head</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The base phrase</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>NMP</td>
<td>IPP</td>
<td>NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffix -zi</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic marker -zi</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.10 -zi in Yang’s diction

The distribution of the suffix -tou is more complicated than that of -zi in Yang’s diction. Resembling the so-called “dummy affix” that exists in Standard Chinese, the suffix or quasi-suffix -tou is attached to the verb (V), adjective (A), and noun (N). 285 In this condition, the suffix -tou has no lexical meaning whereas the quasi-suffix -tou indicates the sense of “smallness, colloquialism, casualness” as it has not finished the lexicalisation process with the head word. 286 In Table 5.11, the suffix -tou in kutou 苦頭 and xiangtou 想頭* is a dummy with no actual meaning and it has merged with the adjective ku or “bitter” and verb xiang or “think” and developed into new nouns, such as kutou (suffering) and xiangtou (idea). 287 In luobo tou 蘿蔔頭 (tiny radish or useless radish), the quasi-suffix -tou has not finished the lexicalisation process to combine with the noun luobo or radish into a new word, indicating the sense of “trifle” or “insignificant.” The semantical marker -tou attaches to the verb (V) and nominal quantifier phrase (NQP) to give the base phrase an additional meaning, since it is in

287 Xiangtou has two formation patterns as follows. 1) A noun word consists of the verbal morpheme xiang 想 and suffix -tou 頭; it refers to “idea”. See Arcodia; Basciano, “On the Productivity of the Chinese Suffixes -兒 -r, -化 -huà and -頭 -tou”, 95. 2) A phrase consisting of the verb xiang 想 and semantic marker -tou 頭, suggests a meaning of “to be worthy of thinking over”. In Table 5.11, 想頭* is the former and 想頭 is the latter.

157 / 251
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

the grammaticalization process and it has not bleached in the semantic aspect.288 Table 5.11 (‘√’ denotes “existence” and “---” denotes “absence”) shows that -tou in xiangtou indicates the action xiang or “think” is worthy of doing and it indicates that sanquan 三圈 (three circles) is a small quantity in sanquan tou 三圈頭.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>言頭</th>
<th>掃帚頭</th>
<th>蘿蔔頭</th>
<th>想頭</th>
<th>想頭*</th>
<th>三圈頭</th>
<th>一斤頭</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The head</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The base phrase</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>NQP</td>
<td>NQP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffix -tou</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi-Suffix -tou</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantical marker 1 -tou (only, just)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantical marker 2 -tou (be worthy of)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.11 -tou in Yang’s diction

Five typical syntactic features of Yang’s performance diction are summed up as follows:

1. Usage of structure “MW - ba 把- (MW)-(N).”

2. Verb chi 吃 (eat) collocates with a wide range of things, covering food, drink, cigarette and so forth.


4. Frequently used aspectual markers zhu 住 and dao 到.

5. The existence of tri-syllabic reduplicative words and high frequency of reduplicated disyllabic words.

In Yang’s diction, the structure “MW - ba - (MW) - (N)” refers to a small quantity of things as indicated by the noun but it does not exist in Standard Chinese. The second MW is optional or unconditional, whereas N is optional where it can be interpreted from the context (Examples 5.1-5.3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MW</th>
<th>MW</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Structural Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>兩</td>
<td>把</td>
<td>兩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>個</td>
<td>把</td>
<td>個</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>把</td>
<td>把</td>
<td>把</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Yang’s diction, liang ba liang yinzi 兩把兩銀子 is Pi Wu’s pet phrase in daily life, which means a few taels of silver. Liang ba liang also collocates with oil, liquor, gold, wine when used by Yang. Examples are given in 5.1-5.3.

The verb *chi* or eat collocates with more nouns than it does in Standard Chinese.

For collocations of *chi*, refer to Table 5.12 (“√” denotes “the same”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>cha 茶 (tea)</th>
<th>jiu 酒 (wine)</th>
<th>fan 飯 (meals; rice)</th>
<th>yan 煙 (cigarette)</th>
<th>kui 虧 (losses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yang’s Usage</td>
<td><em>chi zuocha</em> 吃茶 (drink tea)</td>
<td><em>chi xijiu</em> 吃酒 (drink liquor)</td>
<td><em>chifan</em> 吃飯 (have meals)</td>
<td><em>chiyan</em> 吃煙 (smoking)</td>
<td><em>chikui</em> 吃虧 (suffer losses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Chinese</td>
<td><em>hecha</em> 喝茶 (drink tea)</td>
<td><em>hejiu</em> 喝酒 (drink liquor)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td><em>chouyan</em> 抽煙 (smoking)</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.12 Collocations of verb *chi*

Yang collocates the verb *chi* with objects/things ranging from real food to the miscellaneous, such as tea, rice, wine, cigarette, meals, and losses, as shown in Table 5.12. This collocation, however, does not meet the rules of Standard Chinese. Also, as shown in Table 5.12, “tea” and “liquor” match the verb *he* or “drink” and “cigarette” matches *chou* or “smoke” in Standard Chinese or in Northern dialects.
Three patterns of neutral question structure co-exist in Yang’s diction (Examples 5.4-5.6), and among them, only V-neg.-VP is identified in Standard Chinese.

(4) ADV-VP:  
**ke xizao (a)?**  可洗澡(啊) ? Would you like to take a shower?

(5) ADV-VP, neg-VP:  
**ke diedesi, diebusi?**  可跌得死，跌不死? Will the falling cause death or not?

(6) V-neg-VP:  
**qu bu qu?**  去不去 ? Go or not?

Instead of the post-verbal aspectual marker **zhe 著** of Standard Chinese, **zhu** (phonetic realisation is [tsu]) and **dao** (phonetic realisation is [tɔ]) indicate a continuous situation (Examples 5.7-5.9).

(7) **zouzhu changzhu**  走(V)住唱(V) 住 singing while walking

(8) **qiangshang guazhu hua**  墙上挂(V)住畫 on the wall hung a picture

(9) **shoushang tuodao zaotang**  手上托(V)到灶糖 hand holding malt sugar for the Kitchen God

In the three examples listed above, **zhu** and **dao** are post-verbal aspectual, indicating the status of activities **zou** (walking), **gua** (hung), and **tuo** (holding). The **zhu** suggests that these activities last for a while and placing **zhu** ahead of **gua** indicates that the picture is already hung on the wall. **Zhu** and **dao** in Yang’s diction indicate the aspect of the verb and resemble the aspect marker **zhe 著** in Standard Chinese.

Disyllabic and tri-syllabic reduplication words are easily identified in Yang’s diction, which do not exist in Standard Chinese (Table 5.13). Some of them are verbal phrases, such as **piaopiao 飄飄** (float in air) and **wanwanwan 玩玩玩** (have fun) while
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

the others are combined with auxiliary *de* 的 or suffix *zi* 子, such as *piaopiaode* 飄飄的 (floating in air) and *pianpianzi* 片片子 (little pieces). There are some that are attached by a complement, such as *nongnong ganjing* 弄弄乾淨 (clean up). In terms of the syntactic attribute, the reduplication listed above can be ascribed to a nominal phrase or verbal phrase. Examples selected in Yang’s diction are nominal phrases such as *tiantiantian* 天天天 (everyday) and verbal phrase *longlong* 嚨嚨 (live on a small income).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>飄飄的</th>
<th>飄飄</th>
<th>玩玩玩</th>
<th>片片子</th>
<th>弄弄乾淨</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noun phrase</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>with <em>zi</em></td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal phrase</td>
<td>with <em>de</em></td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>attached by complement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.13 Disyllabic and trisyllabic reduplication words in Yang’s diction

In Yang’s diction, address forms are listed in Table 5.14. *Da laodie* [tii] 大老爹 and *diedie* [tia] 爹爹 refer to “father” whereas *xiao laodie* 小老爹 refers to “son.”

In the story of Pi Wu, children always address Pi Wu as “Wu diedie” 五爹爹, meaning “elder uncle Wu”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addresser is not family</th>
<th>Addresser is family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| father | 大老爹 | 爹爹%
| *da laodie* | *die* [tii] is *P* pronunciation | *die* [tii] is *O* pronunciation |
| son | 小老爹 | 小老爹%
| *xiao laodie* | *die* [tii] is *P* pronunciation | *xiao laodie* | *die* [tii] is *podu* pronunciation |
| wife | 四奶奶 | 奶奶%
| *si nainai* | *nainai* | *nainai* |
| elder uncle | 爹爹 | 爹爹%
| *die* [tii] is *O* pronunciation | *die* [tii] is *O* pronunciation |

Table 5.14 Address forms in Yang’s performance diction

Scholars have conducted a series of research on the syntactic features of Yangzhou dialect. In the following part, I will compare the existing scholarship with my findings on the syntactic features of Yang Mingkun’s diction. First in the
Yangzhou dialect, -zi and -tou are attached to the verb, verbal phrase, noun, nominal phrase, question pronoun, and the adjective phrase when acting as a suffix (including quasi-suffixes) or semantical marker.\textsuperscript{289} As a suffix, -zi and -tou usually indicate a sense of “familiarity, smallness, and casualness”. As shown in Tables 5.10 and 5.11, -zi and -tou both undertake the morphological and syntactic functions as a suffix in the word and semantical marker in the phrase respectively.

Secondly, according to the research on aspectual marker zhe conducted from historical and dialectal perspectives, the aspectual markers zhu and dao in the Yangzhou dialect can be regarded as dialectal cognates of the aspectual marker zhe in Standard Chinese; zhu (住 or 著) and dao have two functions: they indicate a continuation of status or suggest the progressive aspect.\textsuperscript{290} Zhu and dao are frequently used in Yang’s diction. Using the examples 5.7-5.9 selected from Yang’s diction, I have explained that the two aspectual markers exemplified the two functions precisely.

Thirdly, one of the most interesting phenomena in Yangzhou dialect is the co-existence of neutral question patterns. Zhu Dexi argued that the neutral question forms “ADV-VP” and “VP-neg.-VP” do not co-exist in one dialect.\textsuperscript{291} Zhang Min has

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{291} Yu Xiaorong 遇笑容, \textit{Rulinwaishi cihui yanjiu} 《儒林外史》詞彙研究 (Study on the Lexicon of The Scholars), (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2001), 11.
\end{itemize}
conducted a comprehensive study of neutral question forms in the South-eastern Mandarin dialects, including the dialects spoken in Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces. He argued that the applications of “ADV-VP” and “V-neg.-VP” in the Yangzhou dialect have the same frequency. 292 Also, he remarked that “[O]ther variants hitherto undetected may exist in South-eastern Mandarin dialects.” His argument is verified by my findings (Examples 5.6-5.9). Three neutral question forms co-exist in Yang Mingkun’s performance diction and the new one is “ADV-VP, neg.-VP.”

Fourthly, a typical linguistic feature of the Yangzhou dialect is the application of the structures of reduplication words as shown in Table 5.15.293

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>pinyin syllable</th>
<th>structure</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>圈圈子</td>
<td>quanquan zi</td>
<td>MMM</td>
<td>个个个</td>
<td>MM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一把把</td>
<td>yi baba/ji baba</td>
<td>MM</td>
<td>戴戴好</td>
<td>VVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>几把把</td>
<td>ji baba</td>
<td>MM</td>
<td>笑笑的</td>
<td>VV 的</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.15 Reduplication words in the Yangzhou dialect

The tri-syllabic reduplication gegege consists of three measure words 個, meaning “everyone.” Verbal tri-syllabic reduplication wanwanwan contains three verbs wan, meaning “have fun” (Table 5.13). All the structures listed above are identified in Yang’s diction.

Lastly, the appellation system applied in the Yangzhou dialect is interesting, but complicated. 294 Take die, ye and ba 爹 for example, the word die (father/grandfather) was derived from ye (father/grandfather) which was subsequently

294 Wang Qianlei 王倩蕾, “Yangzhou fangyan qingshu chengwei” (Forms of Address for Relatives in Yangzhou Dialect), Yuyan xue yanjiu 35 (2013):166-68.
replaced. Thus, ye has shifted its meaning to address “father’s younger brother.” Later, ba (father) replaces die to refer to “father” through the popularisation of Standard Chinese. As a result, in Yangzhou dialect, ye refers to “younger uncle”, die refers to “father” in O reading [tia tia] and “grandfather” in P reading. Part of the appellation system in Yangzhou dialect is illustrated in Table 5.16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Yangzhou dialect</th>
<th>Present Yangzhou dialect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>爹爹 [tia tia] laozi</td>
<td>爸爸 baba laozi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife</td>
<td>马妈 mama nainai</td>
<td>老婆 laopo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the younger brother of the father</td>
<td>爷 ye</td>
<td>叔叔 shushu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the elder brother of the father</td>
<td>大大 dada</td>
<td>大大 dada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grandmother</td>
<td>奶奶 nainai</td>
<td>奶奶 nainai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.16 Address forms in the Yangzhou dialect

As shown above, two types of address forms co-exist in Yangzhou dialect. Yang Mingkun does not apply the address forms in the contemporary Yangzhou dialect when telling a story (Table 5.14).

Based on the discussion above, I find that the typical syntactic features of the Yangzhou dialect are identical to Yang’s performance language.

All the phonetic and syntactic features of Yangzhou dialect as discussed above have been studied by linguists. Based on the comparative analysis of phonetic and syntactic features of Yang Mingkun’s performance language and Yangzhou dialect, I found out that Yang Mingkun’s performance language is typical of Yangzhou dialect.

5.3 Historical-linguistic Value of Yang’s Performance Language

Among the numerous contemporary works and research on the language of Yangzhou pinghua performance, none of the scholars has pointed out the linguistic value of pinghua performance language by examining the relationship between migration and development of the Yangzhou dialect.

As “[L]anguage can be thought of as a part of culture” I shall explore the linguistic evidence available in the performance language of Yang Mingkun. As discussed in Chapter 1, Yangzhou is situated on the north bank of the Yangtze River in Jiangsu Province, which has experienced several waves of large-scale southward migration since the Western Jin dynasty. Considering that “historical linguistic evidence is a major factor in the reconstruction of prehistoric cultures, the migrations of people bearing cultures and the diffusion of cultural element,” I shall take into consideration the waves of historical migration in my discussion. “[C]o-existing forms found in a single dialect are expected to be ascribed to different strata [however] the synchronic manifestations of linguistic strata, which are recognizable concerning frequency of usage, are not reflective of diachronic stratification.” This point applies to contemporary linguistic research concerning the Yangzhou dialect as most scholars have focused on the synchronic manifestations of linguistic strata and neglected the diachronic. Thus, in this section, I will base my analysis of the value of

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Yang’s performance diction on two key points: diachronic evidence and historical migration.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Yangzhou dialect is described as “neither the Southern dialect nor the Northern; either the Southern dialect or the Northern”. Before the distinctive Yangzhou dialect came into being, the dialect spoken within the area of present-day Yangzhou belongs to a branch of the Eastern dialect group popularised from the mid to the late Han (206 BC-AD 220) period. In this period, the dialects in the Central Plain or Zhongyuan 中原 were called Central dialects. The area in which people spoke Eastern dialects encompasses modern Shandong and northern Jiangsu, extending southwards to the lower reaches of the Yangtze River. In the Han dynasty, the dialect spoken within the area of modern Yangzhou belonged to the Eastern dialect group. Experiencing southward migration since the Western Jin, the distinctive Yangzhou dialect, “born of the interaction between Northern and Wu dialects” emerged as a newcomer and language contact between the Northern and Southern dialects has accompanied its growth.

The neutral question form “ADV-VP” found in Yang’s diction, which already existed in the Northern dialects of the Southern and Northern dynasties, indicates that Yangzhou dialect was influenced by the Northern dialects before the Sui period. The first wave of southward migration took place at the end of the Western Jin dynasty (266-316) and lasted nearly 150 years, following the “Disorders of the Yongjia 永嘉 Period” in 311. In the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420) and the four successive short-lived Southern Dynasties 南朝 (420-589), the Northern dialects reached the north bank of

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299 Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed”, 529.
300 Zhang, “Syntactic Change in Southeastern Mandarin”, 228-29.
The Yangtze River. During this time, the Eastern dialects employed in the modern Yangzhou area were undoubtedly influenced by Northern dialects. Jerry Norman summarised the discussion with Chinese historical linguists concerning the linguistic importance of the Jin (266-420) demographic movements as follows:

> [T]he aristocracy and bureaucrats migrated *en masse* to the region south of the Yangtze. […] The fleeing Jin Gentry brought with them their prestigious Northern dialect, which then became the basis of a new Southern literary standard.

The earliest evidence showing the existence of the specific Yangzhou dialect was in Sui or early Tang dynasty. So far, no research has been done to question whether the Yangzhou dialect already existed in the Jin or the ensuing Southern Dynasties. This inquiry is important because the neutral question form “ADV-VP” (Example 5.4) prevailing in the Northern dialects or Koine during the Northern Dynasties (381-581) is retained in the Yangzhou dialect; this linguistic phenomenon verifies that the Yangzhou dialect was influenced by the Northern dialects earlier than the late Sui period.

Colloquial reading, the original reading of *podu*, and the neutral question form “VP-neg-VP” found in Yang’s diction, reflect the remarkable influence of language contact between Northern and Southern dialects on Yangzhou dialect since the Late Sui to the Song periods. The second wave of southward migration began with the An

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302 Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed”, 530.

303 Zhang, “Syntactic Change in Southeastern Mandarin”, 229.

304 Zhang, “Syntactic Change in Southeastern Mandarin”, 229.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Lushan 安禄山 Rebellion (755-763) in the Tang era, and it lasted for 200 years. Among the three streams related to this wave of southward immigration, the mainstream crossed the Yangtze River and flowed into what is now southern Jiangsu, northern Zhejiang, and southern Anhui. Coblin argued that, “Immigrant settlement patterns in the lower Yangzi area are of considerable interest,” and the Jiang-Huai band had the heaviest point of concentration. The immigrants in this band may have affected the dialect of this region in various ways.

In the Sui and early Tang periods, the Yangzhou dialect was a newcomer. Coblin conducted a phonetic analysis of the syllables’ reading, including colloquial reading or bai forms, Proto-Central Jiang-Huai reading, Late Tang reading, and Early guanhua 官話 (mandarin) reading. In his findings, Coblin remarked that, “We may guess that these bai forms are in fact substrate survivals of the underlying diction varieties found in the belt before the mid-Song inundation.” The colloquial realisations are identical or exactly similar to the reading in the late Tang period. In other words, the colloquial reading might have existed in the Yangzhou dialect in Tang times, following the phonological system introduced in the Mid-Chinese rhyme dictionary from the Wei-Jin 魏晉 period (220-420) to the Song dynasty. While the Yangzhou dialect was deeply influenced by the Northern dialects since the mid-Song period, the colloquial reading co-existed with the literary reading. For examples found in Yang’s pronunciation, refer to Table 5.17.

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305 Ge Jianxiong 葛劍雄, Cao Shuji 曹樹基, Wu Songdi 吳淞弟, Jianming Zhongguo yiminshi 簡明中國移民史 (A Brief History of Chinese Migration), (Fuzhou: Fujian renming chubanshe, 1993), 256-58.
306 Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed”, 532; Ge Jianxiong, Cao Shuji, Wu Songdi, Zhongguo yimin shi 中國移民史 (History of Chinese Migration), (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1997), 348.
307 Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed”, 534.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Middle Chinese pronunciation</th>
<th>Colloquial reading (bai)</th>
<th>Literary reading (wen)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>colloquial reading (bai)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>ia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Chinese pronunciation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k’ɔ</td>
<td>tɕiɔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kɔ</td>
<td>tɕiɔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kɛ</td>
<td>tɕiɛ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.17 Fragments of Mid-Chinese pronunciation (I)

As presented in Table 5.17 above, the colloquial readings contain fragments of mid-Chinese pronunciation.308 MC pronunciation is also preserved through O reading, this is illustrated in Table 5.18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Middle Chinese pronunciation</th>
<th>O reading</th>
<th>Podu reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>🛡m̃ 角`ku</td>
<td>🛡m̃ 角`ku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>角`ku</td>
<td>角`ku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.18 Fragments of Mid-Chinese pronunciation (II)

According to Wang Shihua, the original reading of podu follows the middle Chinese dictionary.309 In the Tang period, under the influence of the Northern dialects, apart from the Mid-Chinese reading, one of the three co-existent neutral question forms of the Yangzhou dialect “VP-neg-VP” (Example 5.6) had also developed. The earliest historical reference to the neutral question form was the Tang poems composed by Northerners.310

The phonetic features of Yang’s diction exhibit the linguistic phenomena of Southern dialects while the Yangzhou dialect has been a member of Northern group since the Song period. With the intrusion of invaders who later established the Jin dynasty, the third wave of southward migration occurred in the early twelfth century, particularly in the wake of the Jingkang 靖康 Incident (1126-1127) of the Song dynasty. Several waves of irregular southward migration of this period lasted up to

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308 Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed”, 534-6.
310 Zhang, “Syntactic Change in Southeastern Mandarin”, 230.
sixty-five years.\(^{311}\) The region covered by the Northern dialects was thus firmly established along the north bank of the Yangtze at that time.\(^{312}\) In other words, the Yangzhou dialect belonged to the Northern dialect group in the Song period.

When Hangzhou was established as the capital of Southern Song dynasty, the Huai River became the boundary between the Jin (1115-1234) and Southern Song territories. The Jiang-Huai area subsequently became the most critical part of Song’s defence, including the present Nanjing and Yangzhou. Active efforts were made to repopulate the Jiang-Huai area to strengthen the defence since it suffered destructive raids during the Jin dynasty earlier. In this circumstance, immigrants from the south settled in this belt and their dialects influenced the local Northern dialect. Under the language contact of this period, the foundation of the Jiang-Huai dialect group was laid. Jiang-Huai dialects belong to the Northern dialect group but they possess the linguistic phenomena of the Southern group. The Yangzhou dialect is a representative of the Jiang-Huai dialect group. It shows features of the Southern dialects. The linguistic findings in Yang’s diction allude to this point: monophthongisation, absence of retroflex initials, distribution of nasal endings [-n] and [-ŋ], MC entering tone, LC reading and the usage of verb *chi*. These phenomena are typical features of the Wu dialect, a member of the Southern dialect group.\(^{313}\)

\(^{311}\) Wu Songdi, *Beifang yimin yu nansong shehui bianqian* (Northern Immigrants and Social Changes in the Southern Song Dynasty), (Taipei: Wenjing chubanshe, 1993), 33-5.

\(^{312}\) Zhou, *Fangyan yu zhongguo wenhua*, 41.

Yangzhou dialect shares the benefits of the “core area” by transmitting its linguistic innovation to the Southern dialects, which is reflected in the use of kinship stems such as die, ye, and the aspectual marker zhu (住 or 著) in Yang’s diction. The reasons behind the demographic movements in history are ascribed to two types: people are compelled by natural disasters, warfare, and the imperial court to move; people initiatively move to other areas for a better life.\(^{314}\) Basically, the demographic movements led by the former reason did not happen after the Ming dynasty.\(^{315}\) Since as early as the mid Song period, demographic movements were mainly led by the latter. During this period, the preponderance of an area in the domain of culture, economics, and politics became an important factor that led to demographic movement. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, a lot of people were attracted to the Jiang-Huai area for its cultural and political prestige at this time. Thus, it performed the role of a “core area,” bearing some linguistic innovations which were eventually transmitted to the south. The city of Yangzhou, a large commercial centre from the Ming to the Qing dynasty in the Jiang-Huai area, shared the benefits of the core area.\(^{316}\) The usage of kinship stems die, ye, and the aspectual marker zhu identified in Yang’s diction has proven this important development.

When referring to “father’s elder brother,” the kinship stem die is older than ye in the Northern dialects, and the latter is a phonetic variant derived from the former. For example, Wu diedie refers to “elder uncle Wu,” and daye refers to “eldest uncle.” However, in the Yangzhou dialect, ye refers to “father’s younger brother.” This shift originated in the Jiang-Huai area and extended as far as China’s southwestern province

\(^{314}\) Zhou, Jianming Zhongguo yiminshi, 9; Fangyan yu zhongguo wenhua, 41.
\(^{315}\) Zhou, Fangyan yu zhongguo wenhua, 44.
\(^{316}\) Iwata, “The Jiang-Huai Area as a Core of Lexical Innovation and Diffusion: A Case of the Kinship Term “ye 爺”, 180.
of Yunnan 雲南, and it was not identified in the area north of Jiang-Huai.\textsuperscript{317} Also, owing to Qing Yangzhou’s political, cultural and economic prestige, the usage of the aspectual marker zhu in the Yangzhou dialect influenced the zhu in the neighbouring Taizhou and Jixi 繁溪 dialects.\textsuperscript{318}

The linguistic analysis of Yang Mingkun’s performance language shows that his diction is characteristic of Yangzhou dialect. His performance language is of great historical-linguistic value. The Yangzhou dialect emerged in the Sui era and later developed into a distinctive dialect. The long period of language contact between the Northern and Southern dialects facilitated the formation and development of the Yangzhou dialect. The results of language contact at different periods of time in history are observable in various strata of the Yangzhou dialect layer by layer.

5.4 Conclusion

The speaking register for Yang Mingkun in the performance of Pi Wu is typical of the Yangzhou dialect in terms of its phonetic and syntactic features. The distinctive Yangzhou dialect came into being during the Sui and early Tang dynasties and is the result of the language contact of the northern and southern dialects. Hence, it presents some of the phonetic and syntactic features both from the northern and southern dialects. Yang’s pronunciation and vocabulary in the performance of Rogue Pi Wu is of great value to linguistic studies on the historical development of Yangzhou dialect. However, they have been largely neglected by contemporary linguists.

\textsuperscript{317} Iwata, “The Jiang-Huai Area as a Core of Lexical Innovation and Diffusion: A Case of the Kinship Term “ye 爺”, 181; 188; 194.

\textsuperscript{318} Wang, “Cong suwan fangyanti zhuci ‘zhu’ de biaoxian kan fangyan jiechu de houguo he jizhi”, 55.
SIX

Lexical Features of Yang Mingkun’s Performance

Language

“I rarely use stock phrases or setting phrases (taoyu 套语) and verses. We storytellers need to keep pace with the times.” This is the remark by Yang Mingkun on his efforts to narrate the story of Pi Wu vividly.319 This chapter will examine how Yang deals with his performance diction when considering his narrative strategy and whether he has achieved his goal. Also, I will examine how the Yangzhou dialect is effectively incorporated in Yang’s performance.

The taoyu and verses employed by Pu Lin in his oral performance have been transcribed to create the atmosphere of a storytelling event. In contrast to Pu’s version, the transcribed texts of Yu and Yang are simple as there are more stock phrases and verses applied in Pu’s version than the latter two versions combined. Moreover, the differences in the use of colloquial words between the three versions are considerable. How do the three versions demonstrate a specific linguistic style of expression? In this chapter, I will first explore the differences in the application of stock phrases, verses and colloquial words between the three texts. I will then examine how the Yangzhou dialect represents the local tradition and customs, which are familiar to Yang and his audiences as well. Next, I will examine Yangzhou dialect—an important means of communication between Yang and his audiences in performance, and the shared

319 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016. In this chapter, the English translation for the terms of stock phrases such as shiyue, huashuo, quieting xiahui fenjie, zhenshi, and zaiyan is cited from Bordahl in Wu Song Fights the Tiger—the Interaction of Oral and Written Traditions in the Chinese Novel, Drama and Storytelling, 113-30; 172; 333.
cultural background by Yang serves as a special channel between Yang and his audiences, which is elusive to outsiders.

6.1 Diction

Chinese dialects do not always have their corresponding written forms in Standard Chinese, and the Yangzhou dialect is no exception. Fortunately, in the twenty-first century, with the development of microcomputer composition techniques taking over from conventional typesetting, it is now much easier to transcribe oral speech in dialects into written form. The text of Yang’s repertoire was transcribed and published in 2015 and his performance speech was recorded in the Yangzhou dialect.

Owing to undeveloped publishing techniques, many dialect words in Pu’s and Yu’s repertoires may have been replaced by literary words in the process of transcription. In this circumstance, the wording styles in the two texts that were transcribed and published in the Qing dynasty and in 1985 deviated from Pu’s and Yu’s to some extent. In the present time, each phonetic realisation in the local topolects can find a corresponding written Chinese character by following two methods. Firstly, one can borrow the characters applied in Standard Mandarin. For example, in the text of Yang, many homophones are borrowed from Standard Mandarin, such as *nong* 嗖. 嗖 is realised as [ŋ] in Standard Mandarin, meaning “garrulous”; it is realised as [lɔŋ], meaning “passable,” by Yang according to the [n-] and [l-] distribution rule in the Yangzhou dialect (see Chapter 5.1). Secondly, new Chinese characters are coined to express phonetic realisations in other dialects. For example, *gang* 口冈 is a newly created Chinese character applied in Yang’s transcribed text to mean “garrulous.”
However, undeveloped publishing techniques cannot explain the usage of all literary words in the transcribed texts. As Bør Dahl pointed out, literary words and *taoyu* or “stock phrases or setting phrases” and other rhetorical devices were used to create the so-called “storyteller manner” of narration by the Ming and Qing authors when writing fiction. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Pu Lin’s repertoire was first transcribed and published under the title *Pure-Wind Dyke* during the Qing dynasty. Although quantities of literary words and stock phrases were identified in this text, Pu might not have used all of them or perhaps used some of them. However, contemporary editors inserted all of them or some of them into the text, aiming to stimulate or highlight the atmosphere of a storytelling event when transcribing Pu’s repertoire into text. On the other hand, Pu might have applied all literary words and setting phrases in his recitation, because the storyteller decides the wording in any performance. Yang stated in an interview in 2016, “My master’s repertoire is in literary style and mine is in colloquial style.” Yang’s master Yu Youchun preferred to use literary words in his performance. Yang also said, “If my audience members are highly educated, I will choose more literary words in the performance.” As Chapter 6 of this thesis focuses only on the lexical features of Yang Mingkun’s performance speech, I limit my study to the performance language of Yang Mingkun. I will not examine whether or not Pu Lin applied literary words or setting phrases in his performance.

The three transcribed texts show how Pu Lin, Yu Youchun and Yang Mingkun dealt with stock phrases, verses and colloquial words in their performances. Only a few *taoyu* are identified in Yang’s transcribed text. In one interview, he said, “I do not

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321 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
recite a poem at the beginning of my recitation. I like to tell my story directly.” \(^{322}\)

When performing, Yang sometimes hits his desk with a wooden block to catch the attention of his audience. Conventionally, a Yangzhou pinghua storyteller reads a poem before telling the story in order to attract the audience’s attention. The poem is introduced by the set phrase *shiyue* 詩曰, meaning “the poem says.” In the transcribed text of Yang, introductory verses with the setting phrase *shiyue* are absent. In contrast to Yang, Pu Lin starts with introductory verses. His introductory poem is a heptasyllabic poem of four lines.

In the transcribed text of Yang’s repertoire, only the folk wisdom marker *sushuo* 俗説 (as the folk saying goes) is identified. *Sushuo* is one of the many stock phrases in a storytelling narrative. In contrast to Yang’s simple style, narrative transition phrases, such as *huashuo* 話説 (the story goes), *zaiyan* 再言 (meanwhile, let’s tell) or *zaishuo* 再説 (meanwhile, let’s tell), and *sushuo*, frequently appear in the transcribed text of Pu Lin’s repertoire. In addition, at the end of each narrative episode, Pu ends with the stock phrase *qieting xiahui fenjie* 且聽下回分解 (please listen to the explanation in the next round). In the transcribed text of Yu, pre-verse phrases *zhenshi* 真是 (truly), *youshuoshi* 又説是 (it is also said as), and *haishuoshi* 還說是 (it is also said as) are identified. For example, Yu uses three pre-verse phrases successively to narrate three verses. His narrative is as follows: \(^{323}\)

\[ \text{真是 (truly):} \]

\[ [... ] \]

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\(^{322}\) Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.

\(^{323}\) Wang et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 106.
Many of the stock phrases mentioned above are absent from Yang’s performance narrative. As he explains, “I think we storytellers should keep up with the times.” 324 Indeed, traditional storytelling narrative formulas such as the stock phrases do not match the language acquisition of the modern audience, because they are adopted from classical Chinese works, which may not be relevant.

From the aspect of phonetic realisation of Yangzhou dialect over the past fifty years, Yang does not cite as many verses as Yu. In fact, Yang retains some verses initially created by Pu by converting them to prose. Pu’s verses and Yang’s prose are shown in Table 6.1:325

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pu’s verses</th>
<th>Yang’s prose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>落地無聲是蓮蓬，四足能行是個兔。 Luodi wusheng shi lianpeng, sizu nengxing shi ge tu.</td>
<td>落地一場霧。天上下之霧，落到地上可是靜悄悄的？沒得聲音哎，落地無聲。 四條腿跑的是只兔，兔子不是四條腿跑的動物？兔子，霧，順音。 Luodi yichang wu, tianshang xia de wu, luo dao dishang keshi jing qiaoqiao de? Meide shengyin ai, luodi wu sheng. Si tiao tui pao de shi zhi tu, tuzi bushi si tiao tui pao de dongwu? Tuzi, wu, shunyin. What falls to the ground is fog. Falling from the sky, the fog touches the ground silently, doesn’t it? Silently! When touching the ground, it is silent. What runs with four legs is a rabbit. A rabbit is an animal that runs with four legs, isn’t it? Tu (rabbit) and wu (fog) rhyme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What silently falls to the ground is fog. What walks with four feet is a rabbit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Pu’s verses and Yang’s prose

324 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
325 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengzha, 47; Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 158.
Pu’s verses might have enjoyed popularity in Qing Yangzhou, but this is not the case in the present time, as not all contemporary audiences enjoy the time-specific verses or understand the meaning. Taking the audience into consideration, Yang expands the verses into prose by including new explanations for them. Otherwise, the audience will be confused when listening to the verses.

Moreover, the verses created by Pu Lin were in the old Yangzhou dialect, which was popular in Yangzhou city during the Qing dynasty. His verses also do not rhyme in the modern Yangzhou dialect. For example, four lines from the game speech *sazhang* 撒帳 by Pu are as follows:326

撒帳撒帳 北. 名花自是開金穀. 賓人休得枉垂涎, 刺蝟想吃天鵝肉.

*Sazhang*sazhang (interjection) in the north, the brilliant flowers bloomed from gold buds. Visitors shall not desire and drool over it, as does a hedgehog yearn to have swan meat.

For the verses to follow the rules of antithetical parallelism, the syllables *bei* 北, *gu* 穀 and *rou* 肉 (shown above in bold type) share the same rhyme [ɔɁ˒] with the entering tone. Yang realises *bei* and *gu* as [pɔɁ˒] and [kɔɁ˒] respectively, but he realises *rou* as [lɣɯɁ˒] without the entering tone. In Chapter 5, I clarified that *rou* has lost its entering tone in the present Yangzhou dialect; it was pronounced [lɔɁ˒] in the Qing period but it is now pronounced [lɣɯɁ˒]. As a result, Pu Lin is able to read the verses in rhyme but Yang cannot. Yang does not incorporate this verse into his performance, owing to the differences between the old and contemporary Yangzhou dialects.

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326 Wang et al. (eds.), *Qingfengzha*, 8.
On reading the text transcribed from Yang Mingkun’s repertoire, I find that his narrative is mostly colloquial. The transcribed text records all the dialect words spoken by Yang in his performance, including slang words, folk sayings, interjections and onomatopoeia. Furthermore, over 1,300 dialect words are documented in the latest interpretation by the editor. Every time when reading Yang’s text, it feels like listening to him recite the story in real-life. Unlike Yang, Pu and Yu applied fewer dialect words. Moreover, in the transcribed text of Pu, the dialect words have no explanation; in the text of Yu, 118 words are supplemented with an explanation. The number of dialect words documented and explained in the three texts are listed in Table 6.2:

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Number of dialect words explained in the three texts

Of the Yangzhou dialect words observed in Yu’s and Yang’s versions, as many as 1,418 words were not identified in Pu’s. The text of Pure-Wind Dyke reprinted in 1996 indicates that it is written in a literary style as compared to a contemporary fictional work. Many words in this version, for example, buke 不可 (must not), zu 足 (foot), and mu 目 (eye), are not included in the lexicon of contemporary Yangzhou dialect. These three words are commonly seen in the lexicon of classical Chinese and they are expressed as buxing 不行, jiao 腳, and yanjing 眼睛 in Yangzhou dialect, respectively.

Although a few Yangzhou dialect words appear from time to time, they do not interrupt the flow of the text. In contrast to Pu’s literary style, Yu’s diction is much more colloquial. Many words in the transcribed text of Rogue Pi Wu published in 1985, are stylistically neutral in the sense that they are neither literary nor colloquial. See Table 6.3 (L: literary words, C: colloquial words, L/C: neither literary nor colloquial words).
Table 6.3 Words in the three texts

As seen in Table 6.3, to express “the next day,” Pu uses the literary word ciri; Yu and Yang use di er tian, which is commonly seen in the colloquial lexicons in both Yangzhou dialect and literary works. In addition, Yang adopts many Yangzhou dialect words that are absent from the text of Yu. For example, jiezhu, nong, Yalibuyaxia 雅裡不雅瑕, and guaiguailongdidong 乖乖隆地咚 found in Yang’s transcribed text are commonly seen in the lexicon of Yangzhou dialect, but they are absent from Yu’s text.

The storyteller decides the words in any performance. Yu Youchun adopts more colloquial words than Pu. However, his repertoire still sounds literary compared to Yang’s. As seen in Tables 6.2-3, Yu uses many literary words. He also “creates” literary words. For example, the introduction of Pi Wu in Yu’s and Yang’s narratives is presented in Table 6.4.327

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327 Wang et al. (eds.), Pi Wu laizi, 7; Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu laizi, 24.
Table 6.4 Introduction to Pi Wu

When introducing the protagonist Pi Wu, both Yu and Yang apply a short “poem.” At first glance, the first four lines of both poems appear similar. However, in terms of wording and rhyme, Yu’s version is closer to a poetic form. Yu omits the suffix -zi in laizi. In Chapter 5, I explained that the suffix -zi is a common occurrence in Yangzhou dialect. Yu omits this by transforming the dialect word laizi to la, aiming to simulate a literary word. Unlike Yu, Yang uses present-day dialect words in his poem, such as du jiujiiu 賭舅舅 (Gamble Uncle) and ewang dadi 詛王大帝 (king of rogues). In addition, in Yu’s version, the last syllable of each sentence, except for the fifth, shares the same rhyme [ɔ]. By contrast, in Yang’s version, only the last syllables of the even-numbered lines share the same rhyme [i].

Based on the examination above, Yang changes his language expression in many ways to adapt to the requirements of the audience and development in the Yangzhou dialect. As a result, the three transcribed texts based on the three storytellers’ repertoires have considerable differences, ranging from stock phrases and verses to colloquial words. The text transcribed from Pu Lin’s repertoire is literary, as stock
phrases, verses and literary words are used frequently. In contrast to Pu’s text, Yang’s
text uses few stock phrases and verses but numerous colloquial words. Compared with
Yang’s colloquial style, Yu’s version close to a literary style as he prefers to use more
words that are “literary/colloquial words.” On the other hand, Yang’s text is reflective
of the language used in contemporary Yangzhou.

6.2 Nong, Yalibuyaxia, Guaiquailongdidong and Huolodo

According to Foley, performers and audiences in communities with living oral
traditions tend to share a special knowledge about the traditions that may be elusive to
outsiders. Moreover, the words of performance metonymically suggest to competent
listeners a greater reservoir of cultural knowledge that will help to create meanings
from the performance. His basic notion is that “traditional structures convey traditional
meanings.”328 The communication between Yang Mingkun and his audiences in the
performance of Pi Wu is a good example of the scenario mentioned by Foley. The
Yangzhou dialect in traditional style is the speaking register by Yang Mingkun in the
live performance of Pi Wu, either in the square or round styles (see Chapters 5 and
7.1); it is the vital communication method between Yang and his audiences. Most of
his audiences are locals (see Chapter 3.3) and thus they are familiar with the Yangzhou
dialect. Yangzhou dialect words reflect the local tradition and customs, which allows
for easy recall and understanding given the cultural background shared by Yang and
his audiences. The Yangzhou dialect and cultural background evoked by Yangzhou
dialect construct a special channel for their communication. People not familiar with

328 Foley, Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic, (Bloomington: Indiana University,
Yangzhou dialect cannot accurately grasp what Yang said. I will use the example of four dialect words below to illustrate further.

*Nong, Yalibuyaxia, guaiguailongdidong and huolodo* (onomatopoeia for the sound of closing a door or drawer) are the four words frequently applied by Yang when he narrates the story of Pi Wu. These terms are also used in the daily conversations of ordinary Yangzhou people today. In this section, I will explore how Yang Mingkun adopts Yangzhou dialect when reciting the story of Pi Wu.

The local language best reflects the everyday lives of the people who speak it. The Yangzhou dialect can accurately describe the daily lives of Yangzhou people. In Yang’s version of the story, there are more than 400 figures who are portrayed as Yangzhou locals. In a way, the Yangzhou dialect is the best tool for him to tell the story from the audience’s point of view. In Yangzhou dialect, *nong* refers to a situation in which someone uses something he does not like or adapts to the situation that does not meet his requirements.\(^{329}\) When Pi Wu lives in poverty as a rogue, his life attitude is *nong*. Due to his unfortunate fate, he was rejected by his social circle when he was a teenager. Thus, he has no opportunity to change his life. He wanders the streets every day, making a living through his knavish conduct and indulges in gambling. He is not satisfied with his life and is unhappy with many things around him.

*Nong* is usually associated with *manman* (slowly), *chaogian* (moving forward) and *yitian* (day by day). *Manman nong* means to “put up with something,” delivering a sense of “being helpless.” For example, one day, Pi Wu and Mama Zhang greet each other in the street. Pi Wu says, “You must

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\(^{329}\) Li et al. (eds.), *Yangzhou fangyan cidian*, 342. In the *Yangzhou fangyan cidian*, *nong* is written as “多農” by the editor.
have made a big fortune! I have not seen you for a few days. You’ve got a big fortune.” Mama Zhang responds and says, “How could I have got a big fortune? I make a living by selling flowers. How poor I am! I muddle through my life slowly 慢慢噥!” Mama Zhang is a peddler selling fresh flowers in Yangzhou in the Qing dynasty and her small business brings her only a small profit. *Manman nong* indicates that her life is not easy, and she has no choice but to carry on as she is. There is another example: when Pi Wu argues with Sun Xiaogu because he does not believe her. In response, the disappointed Xiaogu says to herself, “Since I got married to you, I have not lived a good life. I do not complain about it! I squeeze my nose, control my negative emotion, and I muddle through my life slowly following you 跟著你慢慢噥.” In this sentence, *manman nong* suggests that Xiaogu has no choice but to live with Pi Wu because she is his wife.

When *nong* is associated with *shenghuo* 生活 (live, life), the phrase *nong shenghuo* 噥生活 or *shenghuo nongxialai* 生活噥下來 refers to a person who makes no effort to seek progress in his life. In reality, the poor have no option to get out of their status quo because they do not have the opportunity or money to change their lives. As a result, they usually make no effort in their lives. *Nong shenghuo* appropriately describes their situation. For example, when Pi Wu sees his neighbour Ni Si, he says to himself, “Ni Si sells a load of vegetables each day, the profit he gets from the small business is enough for a day’s expenses for his family of three. They just live through the day 一天的生活就噥下來了.” It seems that Ni Si does nothing more than sell vegetables every day to improve his life. However, to Ni Si, selling

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330 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 26.
331 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 274.
332 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 278.
vegetables is the only thing he can do to make a living. The phrase 生活就噥下來了 effectively reflects the situation of Ni Si.

The word 天 (day) is associated with life. 一天天噥日子 means “struggling to live from day to day,” suggesting a hard life. Chaoqian means “in a forward direction.” Chaoqian nong(nong) 朝前噥(nong) suggests that life is laborious and hence there is a need to look forward. In the story, a lady wants to purchase medicine for her dying husband and says to Pi Wu, “If he is cured, my husband and I can look forward in life. 如果治好他，我們夫妻還能朝前噥噥.” She means she still has hope in her life when she lives with her husband, even though they live in poverty. In other words, it may also mean when she lives alone, her life feels as if it stops moving. Pi Wu understands her situation by the word chaoqian nongnong and decides to play tricks on Jin Erpang to obtain money for the lady.

Yalibuyaxia is a word commonly found in the lexicon of Yangzhou dialect, derived from another Yangzhou dialect word ya. When transcribed into written form, ya borrows the character 雅 from Standard Chinese. In Standard Chinese, 雅 is an adjective meaning “elegance.” However, the application of 雅 in Yangzhou dialect has no relationship with “elegance.” In Yangzhou dialect, 雅 becomes a verb, meaning “enjoy,” or an adjective meaning “comfortable.” Acting as an adjective, the commonly spoken term associated with 雅 is 雅瑕. In the story, Ni Si has never ridden on a sedan chair before. When describing his first experience of sitting on it, he says, “This is quite cozy 這個蠻雅瑕的.” When the sedan chair arrives at the destination,

333 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 308.
he does not want to get off as he enjoys the feeling of sitting on it. As Pi Wu says, “He is enjoying the feeling of sitting on the sedan chair 他正雅住呢.”

**Xiaoya 小雅** refers to activities that involve enjoying the beauty of ordinary daily life. This includes experiences such as eating delicious food and relaxing. These daily life experiences are not as refined as appreciating calligraphy, paintings or literary and musical works. However, Yangzhou people think of the experiences of enjoying delicious food and relaxing as the happiest moments in their lives. Thus, they attach *xiao* 小 (small; little) to the verb *ya*. **Xiaoya** suggests that Yangzhou people appreciate the beauty in their daily lives. For example, a man invites Pi Wu to go out to enjoy morning tea and he says, “Old Wu, go have fun with me! […] There are many steamed rice cakes there, let’s go there to enjoy 到那塊小雅下子 and have a cup of tea.” In this sentence, **xiaoya** infers the joy of having steamed rice cakes.

When *yaxia* is applied in the structure “xxx li 裡 bu 不 xxx,” the interesting word *yalibuyaxia* emerges, which refers to something or someone beautiful but not necessarily graceful. Sun Qiangshi is beautiful but her standing posture and speaking tone make her no different from the plain Jane. Yang Mingkun uses this term to describe her lack of manners. In normal circumstances, *yalibuyaxia* is abbreviated as *bu yaxia*. Pi Wu takes a bath at the Baiyutang Public Bath House the day before his wedding. He plans to steal a suit coat from a rich man who takes a bath there. When he sees a coat belonging to an old man, he says to himself, “The style of the coat is out of date.”

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334 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 604-5.
335 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 50.
336 Ming Guang 明光, “Yangzhouren zhihui shenghuo yu chuansen yuyan de shilu” —“Factual Records of the Intelligent Life and Vivid Speech of Yangzhou People”), in Song et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi lunwen ji*, 184.
of date. It is not suitable for me! Wearing it on the wedding ceremony is not graceful.

把我結婚穿起來不雅瑕.”337 In this sentence, buyaxia means “not graceful.” Interestingly, the second meaning of yaxia emerges partly from sharing the lexical meaning of Yalibuyaxia, which is used to refer to all improper speech and conduct.338

Interjections act as comic relief in Yang’s narrative and in the daily conversation of Yangzhou people. Guaiguailongdidong is one example of this. It is a five-syllable interjection, delivering a sense of astonishment. The tones of the five syllables are shown as ˉ (the first tone), ˉ (the first tone), ˊ (the second tone), neutral tone, and ˉ (the first tone). By referring to sisheng 四聲 (four traditional Chinese syllable types), all five syllables are pronounced with pingsheng 平聲 (level tone). Generally, each interjection in Yangzhou dialect contains zesheng 仄聲 (oblique tone), because zesheng syllables efficiently deliver a sense of astonishment, happiness and anger. Guaiguailongdidong is abbreviated as guaiguai 乖乖. Repetition of guaiguai sounds comical. For example, when Pi Wu is surprised to see his niece, he says, “guaiguatguaiguaguaiguai, guaiguai, it’s you!”339 Five guaiguai used in succession have no lexical meaning but they successfully suggest Pi Wu’s astonishment at seeing his niece. The interjection pochigui 滷嗤鬼 is also a comical term, likened to guaiguailongdidong, but with a negative connotation. Mama Zhang uses this term in her daily conversation with Pi Wu, as the latter often says improper things to her.

Onomatopoeia also serves as comic relief in Yang’s narrative as well as in the daily speech of Yangzhou. In their conversation, Yangzhou people are fond of

337 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 103.
338 Li et al. (eds.), Yangzhou fangyan cidian, 84. In the Yangzhou fangyan cidian, yaxia is written as “丫霞” or “雅霞”.
339 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 743.
adopting onomatopoeia to create a sense of ease. For example, “Huolodo, she closes the door. Huolodo, Mama Zhang opens the closet. Hulongdong 呼隆咚 (sound of closing the door of the house or cabinet), she covers the small cabinet.”340 The two onomatopoeia huolodo and hulongdong enhance the liveliness of an otherwise simple action. Another example is the use of the onomatopoeia zhiga 吱嘎 to mimic the sound of a moving sedan chair. “Zhiga zhiga zhiga zhiga, guaiguai, he is out of the city. Zhiga zhiga zhiga zhiga, he arrives at a street out of the city. Zhiga zhiga zhiga zhiga, he is in the countryside.”341 In this sentence, not only does zhiga zhiga zhiga zhiga describes the sound of a moving sedan chair but it also adds comic effect.

The daily lives of the Yangzhou people are reflected in the Yangzhou dialect; interjections and onomatopoeia act as comic relief in daily speech. Thus, the Yangzhou dialect plays a vital role in Yang Mingkun’s recitation. He successfully portrays around 400 figures in the story of Pi Wu by depicting their daily lives and conversations, as well as delivering comic effect to his audience through the Yangzhou dialect. This is because he is aware that only the Yangzhou dialect can best describe the story of Yangzhou people.

6.3 Comedic Elements

In this section, I will focus on the comedic elements in Yang Mingkun’s performance speech. Other characteristics, including Yang’s facial expressions and mouth acrobatics concerning comedic elements, will be discussed in Chapter 7.

340 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 37.
341 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 714.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

As observed by Richard Bauman, John Miles Foley and Mark Bender, the storyline in a given tradition is shaped by devices that stimulate the imagination through shared knowledge and experiences of the performer and audiences.\(^{342}\) Under normal circumstances, the native southern dialect speaker understands around 70% of the daily conversation in any style of the northern dialect, such as the Beijing and Nanjing dialects. As the Yangzhou dialect is a branch of sub-group of Northern dialects group in modern China, it is not so difficult for locals from the Yangtze River delta such as Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Wuxi to understand what Yang Mingkun is performing. However, they may not be able to get the effect *qu* (interesting) from Yang’s narration. The main reason is that Yang Mingkun shares with local audiences the dialect and life experiences in Yangzhou—the key to decoding Yang’s comedic elements. Those outside the traditional speaking register will not able to fully catch the punch line in Yang’s narration.

*Xue* 噱 or *xuetou* 噱頭 refers to comical speech or activities.\(^{343}\) Telling (*shuo* 說), quipping (*xue*), plucking musical instruments (*tan* 彈) and singing (*chang* 唱) are the four skills in Suzhou chantefable performance. As the saying on Suzhou *pingtan* goes, “Quips are treasures in storytelling”, which suggests the importance of humour and witty remarks in Suzhou singing and storytelling. This saying also applies to Yang Mingkun’s performance. In Suzhou chantefable, humour is identified by the three categories: humour in the flesh (*rouli xue* 肉裡噱), inserting flowers from outside...
(waicha hua 外插花), small sales (xiaomai 小賣). Rouli xue refers to the comedic element that arises from the interactions between characters in the plot. Waicha hua is the comedic element that results from the inserted explanatory notes, similes, metaphors and analogies which are not directly related to the plot. Xiaomai denotes brief witticism or a humorous act, which may be described as an “occasional show-off.” However, it is difficult to determine the nature of the comedic elements encoded in Yang’s narration by referring to the three categories to Suzhou chantefable. Whether the audience is familiar with Yang’s speaking register will decide the comedic elements in Yang’s narration. As discussed before, the channel where Yang and his audiences communicated in performance is constructed by Yang’s performance language—Yangzhou dialect and the cultural background evoked by Yangzhou dialect. Without this special communicative channel, most of the comedic elements will not work on the audience.

Rapport between the performer and audience contributes significantly to a successful performance by Yang Mingkun. Yang’s narration of the story of Pi Wu is filled with comedic elements because he wants his audiences to feel at ease and happy when watching his performance. He does not try to please the audience with crude jokes or vulgar language. Yang Mingkun knows that his audiences consist mostly of Yangzhou people and that “Yangzhou pinghua will lose its vitality when it leaves its birth place.” Yang builds his comical narrative on the shared mentality that centres upon the Yangzhou dialect, daily life experiences, and even what the people have

345 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
346 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
learnt throughout their lives. Yang told me about a failure he has experienced in his
performance career. This happened in Beijing in 1985 when he was nominated as one
of the ten most outstanding artists in China. For this particular performance, nearly all
the audience members were native speakers of Northern dialects and they did not laugh
at his comical presentation because they did not understand the Yangzhou dialect,
having not lived in Yangzhou and they did not share the same cultural background as
Yangzhou people. For these reasons, they were not able to understand the punch lines
Yang delivered.

Yang Mingkun prefers to narrate the story from the stance of the characters in
the story, not from that of an omniscient narrator. His real-life expressions of the
characters’ speech and thoughts satisfy the audience’s curiosity. For example, Units
31-32, “Sticky rice cakes are fragrant and delicious” and “Cheating Boss Wang”
contain an impressive depiction of the shape and taste of the sticky rice cake served in
the shop. Yang does not directly describe how delicious and beautiful the rice cakes
are from the narrator’s point of view; instead, he portrays the rice cakes through a
conversation between Pi Wu and Wang, the owner of a rice cake shop. A few lines
from their conversation are given below (W: Wang, P: Pi Wu).

W: Have a taste! Tell us about their taste.
P: The rice cake made in your shop must taste good.
W: Taste it! Do not comment on them before tasting.
P: OK! It is sweet! Sweet bean paste! It is my favourite! Oh, it is
hot! Good! Very sweet! This one, stuffed with vegetables, guaiguai,
also has lots of shrimp and shrimp eggs. Yummy! The vegetables
are green. Good! Excellent (guagua jiao 呱呱叫)! Guaiguai! It is

347 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 255.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

with sweet sesame paste and sweet-scented osmanthus! Tastes good!

This one with cubed pork fat. Guai! Not bad! This one with nuts!

Good! Guai! Another one is with stuffing as big as a pork ball.

Guai! The excellent aroma is filling my mouth now!

In the above dialogue, the different types of rice cake are presented to the audience directly through Pi Wu’s narration of the tasting experience. Pi Wu can only specify the stuffing, temperature and shape of the rice cake as he is a rogue and cannot describe his encounter with sophisticated words. Considering Pi’s life experience and educational background, Yang organises the speech of Pi Wu with just a few nouns and adjectives and two funny interjections that are commonly used by ordinary Yangzhou people. For the brief comment on the rice cakes by Pi, the interjection guai/guaju is used five times to instil comic effect.

Unlike Yang’s narrative style, Pu directly describes the smell and taste of the rice cakes in literary words by applying the rhetoric device of exaggeration, acting as an omniscient narrator. The lines describing the rice cake in the text of Pu Lin are given below.348

The smell of sticky rice cake directs one to the twelfth floor from the ground. Rice cakes not only satisfy people’s taste but are also good for their health, they stimulate people’s appetites too.

The image of the sticky rice cake narrated by Pu is not as explicit as that of Yang. Pu’s narrative delivers little information about the sticky rice cakes to the audience nor does it create comic effect.

348 Wang et al. (eds.), Qingfengsha, 49.
Yang’s depiction of his characters may appear simple, but it is refined by the application of dialect words. He shapes the characters through their appearance, conduct and speech, and his characterisation is vernacular and comical. For example, Sun Qiangshi is an evil and vicious woman. The elderly Yang Pan is a hooligan living in the Yang Family Village and he always receives small favours from others by sweet talking or promising to help ordinary people solve their problems by talking to county officials. The depiction of these two figures by Yang Mingkun is as follows:349

Sun Qiangshi stands at the door. She looks beautiful standing there. What does she look like? She is flamboyantly dressed, wearing hairpins on her head and jewellery. She holds a handkerchief under her armpit and puts her arm on her hip. She does a hand gesture with her thumb and middle finger joined, using her small nails to pick her teeth, throwing a coquettish look.

He looks pretty good. He is tall, dressed in a large coat, holding one corner of the coat in his hand. He raises his thumb, his beard is stiff, his oily lips glisten as if he just came back from a feast. Smiling with great satisfaction, he grins from ear to ear.

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349 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 11; 27.
When describing Sun Qiangshi, Yang applies the dialect words *yalibuyaxia* and *qu gege* 趣咯咯 (coquettish), as shown in bold above. Generally, the two words are applied with caution because they indicate a sardonic attitude towards women. Sun Qiangshi is a woman who has killed her husband and buried his body in the kitchen. She does this in order to marry her stepson. She is always flamboyantly dressed even when devising evil plans. In addition, her standing posture at the door is linked to a woman always seeking adventures and an indication that she is also not a person of good virtue. These two dialectal words generate comic effect, as they not only indicate that Sun is beautiful but also emphasise her odd dressing style and standing posture. When listening to the short passage about Sun, the audience members who understand the Yangzhou dialect will grasp Yang’s intention as well as picturing Sun’s appearance and gestures vividly in their minds.

Similarly, Yang Mingkun shapes Yang Pan using dialect words, with a focus on his subtle actions. As shown in bold above, he successively applies three tri-syllabic words: *ying chacha* 硬茬茬 (stiff), *you guangguang* 油光光 (glistening with oil) and *xiao xixi* 笑嘻嘻 (grins from ear to ear) to describe the funny appearance of Yang Pan. The lifted thumb, oily lips that glisten and facial expressions while walking suggest that Yang Pan is an outgoing man. Additionally, the name Yang Pan itself is a joke as it shares phonetic similarity with the dialect word *yangpan* 洋槃 (a mouther).

Dialect words have another significant role in Yang’s narrative. For example, he takes advantage of the four expressions of “death” in Yangzhou dialect to construct a facetious conversation between Pi Wu and a young lady who is going to jump into a river. The conversation is given below (P: Pi Wu, Y: Young lady):350

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350 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 408.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

P: 我來問你啊, 你家大舅舅呢?
Y: 大舅舅, 大舅舅死了.
P: 你家二舅舅呢?
Y: 二舅舅, 二舅舅翘了辫子了.
P: 三舅舅呢?
Y: 三舅舅捺了腿了.
P: 四舅舅呢?
Y: 四舅舅嘎咕吃湯飯了.

P: Let me ask you, how is your eldest uncle?
Y: My eldest uncle, he is dead.
P: How is your second uncle?
Y: My second uncle’s pigtail turns upwards (dead).
P: What about your third uncle?
Y: My third uncle stretches his legs (dead).
P: What about your fourth uncle?
Y: My fourth uncle eats his congee (dead).

Phrases such as qiaole bianzi 翘了辫子, na le tui 捺了腿, and gagu chi tangfan 嘎咕吃汤饭 in the Yangzhou dialect mean si or “death”/“to die.” Native speakers will not use these terms, except when they wish to express an explicitly playful attitude to the dead. Usually, they prefer literary words or euphemisms such as qushi 去世 (left the world) or zoule 走了 (gone) to indicate the death of an acquaintance or family member as a form of respect for the dead. However, the young lady applies them consecutively to refer to the deaths of her four uncles. While the audience is expecting a conventional answer, the unexpected answers with the four expressions of death generate comic effect.
Yang Mingkun uses the Yangzhou dialect to create funny conversations, as per Chinese storyteller parlance, “there will be no story if there is no coincidence” (*wuqiao bu cheng shu* 無巧不成書). Including *si*, there are four expressions denoting “death” in the Yangzhou dialect. Coincidentally, the young lady has four uncles and they are all dead; Pi Wu becomes her fifth uncle, matching his name Pi Wu or the fifth Pi perfectly. Yang ingeniously creates this comedic conversation by centring on Pi Wu. Local audience members can easily catch the humour in the conversation as they completely understand the usage of the alternative expressions of death.

As mentioned earlier, the Yangzhou dialect and local traditions are the sources of inspiration for Yang’s fictional creation. This is also the case for his comedic expressions. For example in Yangzhou dialect, *pao* 跑 means “walk” when pronounced with the second tone and “run (away)” with the third. Yang takes advantage of this homograph in creating the narrative of Unit 49, “Running Away with a Pair of Shoes.” As indicated in the headnote, this unit elaborates on how Pi Wu obtains a pair of new shoes through his trickery. The fun part of this narrative is the conversation between Pi Wu and the owner of the shoe store. It reads as follows (W: Wang, P: Pi Wu):

351 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 404.

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W: Walk [*跑* means “to walk” when realised as *páo* in the Yangzhou dialect]! You will feel better when walking in the new shoes. Walk! Walk! Walk faster!

P: Ok! You ask me to run away [*跑* means “to run away” when realised as *pǎo* in Yangzhou dialect], why not! *Dido* 滴篤 (onomatopoeia: the sound of steps), *dido, dido*. 

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351 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 404.
W: Walk faster!

P: Ok! Walk faster! Dido, dido, dido.

W: Walk! The faster, the better!

P: Boss Wang, you asked me to run away, didn’t you? [Indeed, Wang was meant to ask Pi Wu to walk]

W: Yes!

P: I am going to run away.

W: Just walk as you want!

P: Ok! Run! Didao dida.

Pi Wu swings his arms and runs at full speed. […] This got him a new pair of shoes.

The lines above create comic effect for the audience. The audience realises that Pi Wu is playing a trick on Boss Wang as he pretends to understand pao realised in the third tone, meaning “run (away).” Pi Wu knows all along that Wang means “walk” when saying pao in the second tone, but he says to himself, “You (Boss Wang) asked me to run away, didn’t you? … You asked me to run away, why not!” Pi Wu takes advantage of the minor phonetic difference in the tones of pao that give different lexical meanings. In addition, he successfully gains a pair of shoes by cheating Wang using the phonetic difference. Audience members who do not understand the Yangzhou dialect will not grasp Yang’s punch line in this excerpt.

Yang’s comedic presentation also draws on the daily life experiences of Yangzhou people. Their traditions of worship and taboo are turned into Yang’s comical presentation. The popular tradition of sacrifice to the Kitchen God in Yangzhou city is one of the sources of his narratives, as shown below (W: elderly Wang, P: Pi Wu):352

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352 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 421.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

W: It is not possible to hold the wedding ceremony on the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar month.

P: Why?

W: Traditionally, we need to sacrifice to the Kitchen God on that day.

P: To sacrifice to the Kitchen God, you can choose another day such as the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth of the month.

W: How can you say that? We cannot sacrifice on those two days.

P: (Pi smiles.) I know our tradition very well! The soldiers sacrifice on twenty-third, we the ordinary people on twenty-fourth, turtle and soft turtle [bad guys] sacrifice on twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth, respectively. You are not a turtle! So you need to hold a wedding ceremony for your son and also sacrifice to the Kitchen God on the same day, twenty-fourth of the twelfth lunar month. As the proverb goes, Datuishang cuoyuanzi — yishou yijiao 大腿上搓圆子——一手一脚 (literally “Making a ball on the thigh, one arm one leg” referring to an embarrassing situation in which one has to handle several issues at the same time).

Audience members who are not familiar with the sacrifice tradition in Yangzhou will not understand the punch line when listening to the lines above. To resolve this problem, Yang Mingkun interprets the tradition of the sacrifice to the Kitchen God from Pi Wu’s view by enriching Pi’s conversation with Old Wang. The tradition of offering sacrifices to the Kitchen God in Yangzhou generates the type of humour found in this conversation. Pi Wu advised Wang to sacrifice to the Kitchen God on the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth of the twelfth lunar month instead with the intention of mocking Wang as a turtle. Gui 龟 (turtle) or wangba 王八 (soft turtle) in Yangzhou dialect mean “bad guy.” Old Wang is a man without good sense and he always finds excuses to delay his son’s wedding ceremony. For this reason, Pi Wu intentionally chooses the upcoming twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar month for Wang to hold the ceremony for his son. If Wang avoids the promise to arrange his son’s marriage on
the twenty-fifth day using the excuse of offering sacrifice to the Kitchen God, he must offer the sacrifice on the twenty-fifth day and be mocked as a turtle.

The worship activities of Yangzhou people provides creative material for Yang in his comical presentation. In historic Yangzhou, people worshipped various gods, such as Wealth God, Kitchen God, Moon God, the Jade Emperor, the City God and other auspicious gods. However in the story, people worship silver, mirrors and even a toilet lid. Wang Er's wife has an ugly appearance but she wants to look beautiful at any cost. Hence, she kowtows to the magical “Reunited Mirror” eighty-one times. The description of her worship to the Mirror reads as follows:353

She follows his [Pi Wu’s] suggestion to light the joss sticks and candles, putting the Reunited Mirror on the desk together with the Bodhisattva. While kneeling, she says, “Please seat yourself here, magical Reunited Mirror.” Subsequently, she kowtows eighty-one times before the mirror and prays loudly.

Another example is a boss worshipping the silver that he earned from his first deal and the description is as follows:354

He draws silver out from the drawer and puts it in front of the Bodhisattva, conducting several subsequent kowtows to the silver and Bodhisattva at the same time.

353 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 378.
354 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 78.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of *Rogue Pi Wu*

Interestingly, Pi Wu worships a toilet lid that has blessed him in gambling. He attributes his great fortune to the toilet lid and worships it as a bodhisattva. How Pi Wu treats the toilet lid is described below:355

Pi Wu goes back home holding a toilet cover. He puts it on the centre of a desk, lights the joss sticks and candles and prepares to kowtow to it. When conducting kowtow, he prays: “Great General toilet cover, please bless me in my table gambling.” From then on, the toilet cover becomes his god.

The most ironic worship recorded in *Rogue Pi Wu* is the sacrifice made by the Shandong thieves before their theft. The description of their worship is as follows:356

The Shandong thieves bring an incense burner and candlesticks onto the desk, drawing out three sticks of incense, three pieces of yellow paper and a big bowl of water.

What are they doing? Are they praying for a fortune?

After lighting the incense, the thieves pray, “By my faith, we come here for the first time so we do not know who is rich. Please indicate the right direction to the rich.”

Subsequently, they light the paper and throw it into the sky and let the burning paper float in the wind. Ashes float in the southwestward direction. The Shandong thieves say excitedly, “God exists around us!”

355 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 563.
356 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 580.
As shown in the four passages above, the worship activities performed by Wang Er’s wife, the shop owner, Pi Wu and the Shandong thieves do not make sense from the perspective of contemporary audiences as they very well know that people cannot become beautiful just by worshipping a mirror or become rich by worshipping the silver and toilet lid. Hence, the excerpts above provoke laughter because the audience cannot believe that the mirror and the toilet lid would be worshipped by someone living in the Qing era. The most comical part is that the Shandong thieves do not hide the fact that they plan to steal but actually sacrificed and tell the truth to the god. They hope that the god will lead them to a rich family so that they can steal a huge fortune. Yang’s narrative of the Shandong thieves’ thinking provokes laughter among the audience.

Pi Wu is portrayed as a funny rogue because he is concerned about the taboo shared among thieves. He knows that thieves will run away as soon as they hear the syllable *zhuo* 捕 (catch) because they are afraid of being caught by court officials. He considers the syllable *zhuo* to be taboo to thieves in daily conversation. Thus, Pi Wu reminds Ni Si not to use this syllable when speaking at his wedding ceremony as most of his wedding guests are thieves. This is described as follows:357

Ni Si asks Pi Wu, “Why should we call *zhuozi* (desk) *taizi* （檯子, desk) tomorrow?”

Pi Wu says, “Tomorrow you must not say *zhuozi*, you must say *taizi*. As most of the guests who will come to my wedding ceremony tomorrow are thieves and rogues, they will be afraid of hearing the syllable *zhuo* [a sound associated with the meaning, “catch”]. They

357 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 132.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

will run away quickly when you say zhuozi. Remember to say taizi, understand?"

As described in the passage above, Pi Wu appears very considerate to his guests when he gives Ni Si the friendly reminder. The audience catches the humour when they hear that Pi Wu demonstrates consideration for the thieves as he is also afraid of hearing the syllable zhuo. After all, he is a rogue who cheats on others.

In addition, Yang adds his own life experiences in Yangzhou to the story of Pi Wu. Liquor brands such as Shuanggou 雙溝, Nü’erhong 女兒紅 and Yanghe 洋河, familiar to locals in contemporary Yangzhou, appear in the conversations of Pi Wu.\(^{358}\)

When Pi Wu speaks about a traditional Chinese medicine shop, he refers to Dadesheng 大德生, a contemporary Chinese medicine chain store.\(^{359}\) In many other examples, Yang embellishes his comical comments on the story by drawing analogies or comparing them with current events. For example, Sun Xiaogu feels shy when talking to Mama Zhang about her marriage. To help the audience appreciate this, Yang compares Sun’s feelings of shyness about marriage issues with the feelings of a modern girl talking about her love experiences in public. His narrative is as follows:\(^{360}\)

In ancient China, parents arranged their daughters’ marriages. When talking about marriage issues, girls felt shy and blush. They tried to avoid this topic.

Girls of our time are different. For example, one day I met some girls. They were eighteen or nineteen years old at the most. One of them spoke to me, “Mr Yang, you do not care about me.” I said, “Why did you say that?” “I am around eighteen years old.” “Yes, you are.” “You have got

\(^{358}\) Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 145.

\(^{359}\) Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 329.

\(^{360}\) Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 165-66.
many friends, haven’t you? Introduce a good boy to me, and we may fall in love.” They were proud when talking about their love experiences. The more experiences they had, the more honoured they felt. “Mr Yang, I have fallen in love six times so far.”

Girls living in ancient China are shy when talking about their marriages so Sun Xiaogu does not answer Mama Zhang’s question about her wedding.

When the audience listens to Yang’s narration of modern girls talking about their love experiences, they strongly feel the difference between girls living in Qing Yangzhou and those in the present day. At the same time, they are able to comprehend Yang’s exaggeration as they know that a girl aged around eighteen years in contemporary Yangzhou will not usually conduct herself in the way Yang describes. Yang makes use of exaggeration to produce a striking contrast on the social background of girls living in Qing Yangzhou and those in contemporary Yangzhou.

In addition, Yang draws on his early childhood experiences when narrating about Pi Wu walking alone at night. Some of the lines are as follows:361

Indeed, Pi Wu is fearless and courageous. He sings while walking alone at night. When walking alone at night, we feel braver singing a song or saying something to ourselves. Pi Wu is not an exception! He plans to sing a folk song. Take me as an example: when I was a child, I used to sing a song when walking on a lane without any lighting. What did I sing? I sang the song “We Rely on the Sailors When Sailing at Sea” (Dahai hangxing kao duoshou 大海航行靠舵手). “Dido (onomatopoeia of the sound of steps) dido dido dido.” I went through the dark lane by singing a song. Pi Wu is smart, and he is a master of opera such as Beijing opera, Su opera (suju 蘇

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361 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 307.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

When listening to the presentation above, the audience is amused to discover that the fearless Pi Wu is afraid of the dark. Yang speaks about his own experiences of walking alone at night at a young age to explain why Pi Wu plans to sing a song while walking in the dark. However, given the title of the story and the knavish conduct of Pi Wu, the audience’s impression is that Pi Wu must be a fearless person. In this presentation, the image of the fearless Pi Wu does not develop in the way the audience expects, and his weakness is revealed. The plot twist in the narrative generates humour.

As well as the plot twist, the list of the opera genres that Pi Wu knows also generates comic effect. Yang says that he sings the song *Dahai hangxing kao duoshou* when walking at night, aiming to show Pi’s favourites. According to Yang’s narrative, Pi Wu is familiar with various genres of opera such as Beijing opera, Su opera, Kun opera and Huangmei opera, which are still popular today. It is not important to know whether Pi Wu is a master of such genres. Yang lists them merely to create a connection between Pi Wu and the contemporary audience. The audience can resonate better with Pi Wu knowing that they share the same interest.

Yang also draws on riddles, folk sayings, witty words, interjections and onomatopoeia in Yangzhou dialect to create a sense of facetiousness. For example, at the very beginning of Unit 1, a rogue asks an old fortune-teller to tell his fortune. The fortune-teller does not like the rogue and is reluctant to tell him anything. To make fun of the rogue, the smart fortune-teller recites a poem, making hints that the rogue is a beast in public. His poem is as follows:362

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362 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 3.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

眉如直八，一世发达。
二目不同，一世不穷。
鼻如玄田，一世有铜钿。
嘴如牛一，一世有得吃。

Your eyebrows look like the character ba 八 (eight), you will be wealthy in life. Your eyes are distinct, you will never live in poverty in this life. Your nose looks like the character tian 田 (farming field) and suggests that you do not lack money in your life. Your mouth looks like the characters of niu 牛 (cow) and yi 一 (one), and it implies that you will not lack food in your life.

The characters ba 八, tian 田, niu 牛 and yi 一 are structural components of the two characters that form the word “beast” (chusheng 奴生). The riddle relates to the word chusheng. Contemporary audience members are not familiar with riddle games and may not be able to solve the riddle. To resolve this issue, Yang includes Pi Wu’s father-in-law Sun Dali, a well-educated county official, in this narration.

In traditional Chinese culture, a riddle is a type of game that consists of two parts: question (mi mian 谜面) and answer (mi di 谜底). Pi Wu sets a series of riddles relating to the names of dishes, aiming to cheat the boss. Some of the riddles created by Pi Wu are as follows (P: Pi Wu; B: Boss):363

P: I will tell riddles and as for you, please guess the dishes’ names.
B: No problem. Riddles, please! I will work out all of them.

P: Let us start with the names of eight dishes. “A beggar gives birth to a baby” (jiaohuazi shenghaizi 叫花子，生孩子), What is the dish?
B: Peanut (huashengrenzi 花生仁子), is that right?

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363 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 144.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

P: A pole cannot touch the bottom of the sea. What is the dish?

B: Sea slug (海參 haishen), is that right?

In this episode, Pi Wu sets fifteen articles of riddle. Each riddle is funny as it relates to the name of a dish. It is unexpected that Rogue Pi Wu has an ability to create fifteen articles of comical riddle relating to fifteen names of dishes during the conversation with a young owner. This shows that Pi Wu is a master of trickery but also generates comic effect to the audience.

Folk sayings are as witty as riddles but easier to understand than the latter; hence, Yang includes quite a few of them in the narrative. Take the conversation between Sun Qiangshi and Mama Zhang as example (S: Sun Qiangshi; Z: Mama Zhang):364

S: 你要放在心上呢. You need to keep this in mind (place in your heart)!

Z: 挂在肝上呢. It is now hung on my liver!

Fangzai xinshang 放在心上 is a common phrase in Yangzhou dialect: it means to “have something in mind.” However, the phrase guazai ganshang 挂在肝上 does not exist and is produced by following the structure of fangzai xinshang. Yang creates the phrase and includes in the conversation to generate humour. On a few occasions, Yang directly resorts to exaggeration to create a comical narrative. Generally, “partiality” is translated into pianxin 偏心 (literally “deflective heart”) in the Chinese language. Yang uses the literal meaning of pianxin in his narrative. It reads: “Many people are selfish and show partiality all the way. Their hearts move elsewhere while beating.

364 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 18.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Beat and beat, their hearts move to the armpit.” The heart does not actually change position while beating. However, in Yang’s narration, the heart of a selfish person will jump to his armpit. Yang’s exaggerating narrative not only amuses the audiences but also strikes a chord in the audience’s heart as he uses a sneering tone to demonstrate his negative attitude towards selfish people.

The onomatopoeia guadi guadi 呱滴呱滴 is used to liven up a long conversation. The interjection pochigui 潑哧鬼 is Mama Zhang’s pet phrase—she applies it when she wants to express denial. When Pi Wu is listening to Mama Zhang and explains why she has chosen him as Sun Xiaogu’s husband, only five interjections, an 咻, en 嗯, a 啊, ao 嚎 and ai 哀, are used in the long conversation. As Yang narrates the story, “Pi Wu said, ‘An,’ ‘en,’ ‘an, an, an,’ ‘en,’ ‘The bad guy!’ ‘En, en, en,’ ‘a?’ ‘ao.’ ‘ai.’” What Mama Zhang wants to say to Pi Wu has already been mentioned to the audience. From the stance of the storyteller, Yang Mingkun understands that it is not necessary to repeat this to the audience. He applies five interjections and arranges them in Pi’s response to Mama Zhang’s explanation. The five interjections spoken by Pi Wu in different tones generate comic effect because the intonations of the five syllables realised by Yang Mingkun cover the life experience of Sun Xiaogu told by Mama Zhang.

Yang Mingkun frequently applies folk sayings to the story of Pi Wu as almost all the characters are depicted as Yangzhou locals. Folk sayings are the wisdom of the ordinary people and most are funny. For example, gongji hai sangzi—buti 公鷄害嗓

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365 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 23.
366 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 165; 167.
367 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 47.
368 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 31 July 2016.
369 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 31 July 2016.
Gongji hai sangzi means the rooster has a sore throat so it cannot crow, which is expressed as “cannot crow” (buti 不啼) in Yangzhou dialect. Buti sounds identical to another word buti 不提 meaning “do not mention.” Thus, when Yang Mingkun needs to use the word 不提, he uses the folk saying gongji hai sangzi instead. The audience will find such references comical.

Folk sayings produced by Yangzhou locals express their simple yet humorous attitude to life. Some examples include zhusun wei tizi 竹筍煨蹄子 (beat a person with a bamboo stick); maomaoyu dahuoer sasa 毛毛雨大家夥兒灑灑 (share the profits with others).371 Stewed pig trotters with bamboo shoots (zhusun wei tizi 竹筍煨蹄子) is a popular Yangzhou dish. It is used to imply that a person has endured a severe beating with a bamboo stick. Inspired by the features of the natural weather phenomenon drizzle (maomaoyu 毛毛雨), maomaoyu dahuoer sasa suggests that people with good sense should share the profits with others. Yangzhou locals are intimately familiar with these sayings and Yang readily applies them in his performance. These folk sayings also create humour, making Yang’s performance distinct and impressive.

As discussed above, Yang Mingkun narrates the story of Pi Wu in a facetious tone. The clever use of Yangzhou dialect, sharing life experiences and understanding the mental make-up of Yangzhou people form the comedic elements of his presentation.

370 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 160.
371 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 40; 181.
6.4 Conclusion

As a performer, Yang Mingkun bases his language expression on the cultural background of the contemporary audience as well as on the lexical features of Yangzhou dialect. Firstly, considering the phonetics and lexis development of Yangzhou dialect over the last four centuries, he transfers the verses initially created by Pu into prose without changing the original meaning and omits many of the stock phrases previously applied in Yangzhou pinghua. In addition, he does not use the literary words that existed in the repertoire inherited from his master Yu Youchun and instead adopts colloquial words.

Considering the fact that majority of the audience of the Yangzhou storytelling are locals of Yangzhou, he bases his comical narratives on the Yangzhou dialect, the mental make-up of the Yangzhou people and their daily life experiences. From my findings in his research, the use of Yangzhou dialect words is the most vital communication in his comical expression.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

SEVEN

The Features of Acting by Yang Mingkun

Yang Mingkun is proud of his performance techniques. He said, “My master said I was better than him in imitating Pi Wu as I act like Pi in terms of voice narration, facial expression and gestures.” In this chapter, I will examine Yang’s features of acting and explore how Yang enliven the descriptions in his stories through aural and vocal means of communication.

Yangzhou storytelling performance involves five basic acting skills, that is finding expressions through kou (mouth), shou (hand), shēn (body), bu (step) and shén (facial expression). Kou refers to elements of the performer’s speech, including speaking styles and mouth acrobatics known as kouji 口技 in Chinese. Shou, shēn and bu refer to activities carried out by the performer using the hands, body and steps respectively; shén refers to the performer’s facial expressions. These are the five fundamental aspects of Yangzhou pinghua performance. However, they are not of equal significance in individual performances. Among them, kou and shén are of particular importance in Yang’s style. This chapter aims to explore the acting features of Yang Mingkun in terms of kou, shou, shēn, bu and shén. Firstly, based on the data from the observation of his performance and his interviews, I will explore which type of speaking styles Yang uses in his performance of Rogue Pi Wu. Secondly, I will focus on Yang’s paralinguistic and non-verbal features in performance, such as his facial expressions and body gestures, particularly the aspects of mouth acrobatics, shou, shēn, bu and shén. Thirdly, I will discuss how as a storyteller responsible for the

372 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 August 2016.
transmission of the traditional repertoire, Yang has preserved the oral tradition of the Pu School by applying the Yangzhou dialect and mouth acrobatics in his performance; and how as a performer, Yang has made adjustments to his pronunciation and extends the application of mouth acrobatics.

### 7.1 Speaking Styles

Yangzhou pinghua storytellers apply different types of speaking style according to different plotlines and personal preferences. Among the various speaking styles, yuankou (round mouth) and fangkou (square mouth) are the two most frequently applied styles.\(^{373}\) The square mouth style refers to the storyteller speaking slowly in a literary form with forceful pronunciation and a rhythmic flow of sound. By contrast, the round mouth refers to the performer speaking rapidly and smoothly, as in daily conversation. In terms of phonetic realisation, storytellers do not share the same criteria of the two speaking styles.\(^{374}\)

Yang Mingkun uses Yangzhou Mandarin (Yangzhou guanhua 揚州官話) in the square mouth and Yangzhou dialect in the round mouth when reciting the story of Rouge Pi Wu. Børdahl outlined the five criteria of speaking styles of the five eminent storytellers: Wang Xiaotang 王筱堂 (1918-2000), Li Xintang 李信堂 (1934-), Fei Li, Chen Yintang 陳蔭堂 (1951-) and Dai Buzhang 戴步章 (1925-2003).\(^{375}\)

1. Monophthong finals are realised as a diphthong.
2. Phonetic realisation [er] or [ar] of the final -er is retained.

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\(^{375}\) Børdahl, “Yangzhou pinghua zhong de koutou xushu yu ‘shuokou’”, 122.
3. Initials [l-], [n-] or [r-] are distinguished or not.

4. MC entering tone is absent.

5. Colloquial pronunciation exists.

When observing Yang’s performance, I adjusted the third rule by considering the phonetic features of the Yangzhou dialect. In Chapter 5, I discussed how in the Yangzhou dialect, consonant initials ㄴ- ㄴ- ㄴ- and ㄹ- are distinctive and have their own distribution according to the pronunciation features of the vowels. For example, [ㄴ-] must be followed by a hongyn vowel and [ㄹ-] by a xiyn. The distribution of the three initials in Yangzhou dialect does not overlap as it does in the Northern dialects or Standard Mandarin, resulting in the common misconception that the three initials are equivalent to each other in the Yangzhou dialect and identically realised as “blurred [ㄴ-].” Based on this, the third rule ignores the phonetic traditions of the Yangzhou dialect. It does not work well when applied to Yang’s speaking. In Yang’s speech, ㄴ- ㄴ- ㄴ- and ㄹ- are distinguished clearly by following the tradition of Yangzhou dialect. According to rule three, it would be wrong to argue that Yang should adapt his pronunciation to the Northern dialects in the square mouth. Based on the study of Yangzhou dialect and the close observation of Yang’s performance, I attached a restricted condition “according to phonetic rules of the Beijing dialect” to the third rule. The new rule is as follows:

*3. Initials [ㄴ-], [ㄹ-] or [ㄹ-] are distinguished or not according to phonetic rules of the Beijing dialect.

I observed Yang’s live performance and interviewed him at the Yangzhou Pi Wu Story House in April, July and August of 2016. Yang told me that he applied the square mouth and the round mouth styles when telling the story of Pi Wu. He speaks Yangzhou Mandarin in the square mouth and Yangzhou dialect in the round mouth
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

style. According to Yang, the pronunciation difference between Yangzhou Mandarin and Yangzhou dialect, especially the wendu or “literary pronunciation,” is that the former realises wendu only. In her study, Børdahl found that all five storytellers also realised wendu in the square mouth.

When replying to my question on which type of speaking styles he applies when performing Rogue Pi Wu, Yang said:376

I apply the square mouth and the round in performance but most of the time, I apply the round mouth. I use the square mouth only when highlighting something important to the plotline, such as my comment on a character’s conduct or an event, introduction to a figure, and crisis (guanzi 关子) at the end of each round.

On a further note, I asked him about the pronunciation differences between the square mouth and the round mouth styles. Yang explained the exact difference between the two speaking styles in his performance as follows:377

When speaking in the square mouth, I deliberately speak slower and pronounce more clearly in Yangzhou Mandarin. For example, when reading a poem, I apply the square mouth. When introducing a new figure to the story, I apply it as well.

Apart from the occasional square mouth application, I adopt the round mouth in Yangzhou dialect; my round mouth [Yangzhou dialect] sounds identical to the Yangzhou dialect. However, I have to project my voice without a microphone to ensure

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376 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 August 2016.
377 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 August 2016.
everyone in the story house hears me clearly. For the sake of convenience, my phonetic realisation in the round mouth, to some extent, differs from what you hear on the streets.

As shown above, Yang adopts Yangzhou Mandarin in the square mouth and Yangzhou dialect in the round. In Chinese dialect terminology, there is no such term as “Yangzhou Mandarin.” What exactly is Yangzhou Mandarin? Yang answered this question as follows:378

Yangzhou Mandarin, as I mentioned before, is the Yangzhou dialect with some phonetic adaptions of Standard Mandarin. For example, jia qu 家去 (return home) is realised as [tɕia tɕˈy] in the square mouth; it is [ka k’ɪ] in the round.

Yang explained the phonetic difference between the square mouth and the round in his performance using the phrase jia qu. He applies the realisation [tɕia tɕˈy] in the square mouth and [ka k’ɪ] in the round. In Chapter 5, when discussing the colloquial and literary readings, I mentioned that the phonetic realisation of jia and qu exists in Yang’s diction as well as in the Yangzhou dialect. In Table 5.5, [tɕia tɕˈy] and [ka k’ɪ] are the literary and colloquial readings of the word jia qu respectively. In other words, Yang realises the literary reading in the square mouth and colloquial in the round.

Yang realises er as [a] without the retroflex ending [r] in his performance. As discussed in Chapter 5, er is realised as [er] in the Beijing dialect as well as in Standard Mandarin, but as [a] in the Yangzhou dialect. Unlike Yang, the five storytellers realised er as [ar] or [er] with a retroflex ending in their performance speaking. To

378 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 August 2016.
understand whether Yang realises the final or syllable -er/er with a retroflex ending [r] as [ar] or not, his response was: “Er is always realised as [a] in the Yangzhou dialect as well as in my performance. I have never realised er as [er] or [ar] in the Yangzhou dialect.”

Earlier in Chapter 5, I discussed the MC entering tone in Yang’s speaking and in the Yangzhou dialect. When telling a story, Yang realises the MC entering tone in both the square mouth and the round. For example, he reads he, pa, zhuo, xue and le as [xaʔ], [p’aʔ], [tsuaʔ], [ɕiaʔ] and [laʔ] respectively. By contrast, only Wang Xiaotang and Chen Yintang of the five storytellers realise the MC entering tone in the public talk (guanbai 官白) in the square mouth.

One of the phonetic features of Yang’s speaking style is the monophthongisation of a diphthong. However, in the square mouth, Yang and the five storytellers commonly diphthongise the monophthong in the Yangzhou dialect. For example, Yang extends the realisation of [e] and [æ] as [ei] and [ai], both of which sound like the Beijing dialect.

Based on the observations above and Børnadal’s findings, I list and compare the phonetic features of Yang Mingkun with those of the five storytellers in Table 7.1 (S: square mouth; R: round mouth; P: present; A: Absent; P/A: sometimes present; DYZ: daily Yangzhou dialect; BJ: Beijing dialect). As I have limited my current research to two speaking styles in Yangzhou pinghua, the “talk” or bai is not examined here.

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379 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 1 August 2016.
380 Among the various terminologies for “talk” (bai 白) in Yangzhou storytelling, “public talk” refers to the dialogue or monologue of the protagonist in the story.
381 Børnadal, “Yangzhou pinghua zhong de koutou xushu yu ‘shuokou’”, 122.
As shown in the table above, in terms of phonetic realisation, the so-called Yangzhou Mandarin applied by Yang in the square mouth is the daily Yangzhou dialect with diphthongised monophthong finals but without the colloquial pronunciation. Indeed, Yangzhou Mandarin sounds identical to the Yangzhou dialect, as diphthongised monophthong finals and colloquial readings can be neglected with the mutual understanding of the natives. Comparing the six storytellers’ phonetic features with the phonetic rules of the Yangzhou dialect and the Beijing dialect (as shown in Table 7.1), I find that, in both the square mouth and the round, Yang’s performance diction sounds closer to the daily Yangzhou dialect than that of the other five storytellers. The five storytellers, to some extent, adapt their realisations to the Beijing dialect.

Based on the examination above, I find that Yang’s two speaking styles, that is the square mouth and the round, can be distinguished from each other by the colloquial reading and the diphthongised monophthong finals. His phonetic realisation in the two mouth styles is different from that of the five eminent storytellers. His performance language in both speaking styles can be read as the Yangzhou dialect.
7.2 Mouth Acrobatics, Look, Hand, Body and Step

Storytellers must master an array of eye, hand, and body movements, gestures, expressions, and paralinguistic sounds to portray the characters effectively and enliven the descriptions in their stories. Yang Mingkun’s live performance of Rogue Pi Wu provides an example in point. Although the “mouth” and the other four acting skills—“look,” “hand,” “body” and “step” work together in Yangzhou pinghua, they do not have equal status in an individual performance. When performing Rogue Pi Wu, Yang Mingkun applies the look and hand and mouth terminologies more often than the other two.

In general, Yang does not move his body excessively. He simply sits on the chair behind the small square desk for almost the entire performance. Sometimes, he touches the teapot or the teacup, which is known among professional storytellers as favourable turn (zhuanji 轉機). Why should we call a teapot and a teacup zhuanji? Yang answered:

The teapot or teacup is not part of the pinghua storytelling performance. The talking stopper, handkerchief and folding fan are necessary for performing but the teapot or teacup is not. Professionally, the teapot or teacup are called zhuanji. When performing, we touch them only when we stop talking for various reasons. For example, when I forget my words, I touch them. The audience would not know this as they think the performer is going to talk about a crisis or adjust his speaking tempo.

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382 Bender, Plum and Bamboo, 60.
383 Interview with Yang Mingkun, 18 April 2016.
When performing, Yang does not frequently apply \textit{shēn} and \textit{bu} terminologies. As the story of Pi Wu centres on the daily lives of ordinary Yangzhou people, the individuals in the story do not engage in extreme behaviours. In contrast to Yang Mingkun’s application, members of the Wang School of \textit{Water Margin} usually apply \textit{shou}, \textit{shén} and \textit{bu}. As nearly all the key figures in the story of \textit{Water Margin} are masters of martial arts, it is a major challenge for the storyteller to imitate them.

The live performance of \textit{Rogue Pi Wu} by Yang Mingkun meets the aesthetic effect \textit{wei} as Yang realises the tradition of the Pu School in a unique style—the Yang School of Pi Wu (see Chapter 1.3). Yang sits on a chair when reciting even when he impersonates a character in the story. Occasionally, he stands up to mimic a character who is featured using a unique standing pose, or to show gestures clearly to the audience. He sits facing his audience when reciting and moves his body to the right or left by forty-five degrees at the most when impersonating a female character. His gestures are slightly more exaggerated than in daily life. The most common of these is when he raises one arm with the palm of his hand lying horizontal, which looks like the gesture applied when introducing someone or something. However, when mimicking a running man, a fighting man or a mass scene, he dramatically swings his arms or raises them up high. The folding fan and the handkerchief are props used effectively by Yang to impersonate characters. He opens up the fan and uses it as an umbrella or holds it in his hand and uses it as a baton; he wipes tears with the handkerchief when mimicking a crying woman or covers his hair with the handkerchief when mimicking an old woman.

Yang Mingkun is a master of using “mouth acrobatics” in performing. His voice plays a vital role in his impersonations. Traditionally, the Chinese term “mouth acrobatics” in oral performing arts refers to the ability to perform mimicry. Pu Lin, the

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218 / 251
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founder of the Pu School, is a master of mouth acrobatics. Unfortunately, we are no longer able to enjoy his fabulous performance. Today, Yang Mingkun is also regarded as a master of mimicry and humour. Yang is skilled at imitating various types of voices, the sounds of musical instruments, rain, women talking, a baby crying and so forth. When impersonating the characters in the story, his role changes and his voice also changes; he adjusts his voice to vividly portray the imagery associated with the portrayal of his characters. For example, when talking as a Shanxi boss, Yang speaks in the Shanxi dialect; as an illiterate, Yang uses a colloquial pronunciation that is indistinct; as a trader, Yang speaks smartly and quickly using clear pronunciation; when portraying a female, Yang uses a graceful feminine voice and when portraying a male, he speaks in a loud and rough voice.

In the square mouth, Yang applies mouth acrobatics to create humour. He creates a biography for Pi Wu, which reads:\textsuperscript{384}

\begin{quote}
上無片瓦，下無寸鐵，
日無飢餐之米，夜無鼠耗之糧，
喝酒賭錢，脾氣極壞，
開口就罵，舉手就打，
六親不靠，窮及無賴。
\end{quote}

There is not even a tile above his head, there is not even a \textit{cun} \textsuperscript{385} of metal below.
There is no rice for meals in the day, there is no grain for mice to steal at night.
With a very bad temper, he drinks wine and gambling.

\textsuperscript{384} Yin et al. (eds.), \textit{Pi Wu lazi}, 11.
\textsuperscript{385} \textit{Cun}, is a Chinese unit of length. One \textit{cun}, equal to one-tenth of \textit{chi}, is approximately one third decimetre.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Opening the mouth to scold and raising the arms to fight.

No relatives to rely on, he lives like a knave in poverty.

When reciting the passage above using the square mouth, Yang speaks slowly with forceful pronunciation. Although, strictly speaking, this passage is not structured in fixed rhyme and form, it still reads with a certain tempo. If Yang reads the biography only when Pi Wu is introduced to the story for the first time, this will not create much of an effect. However, Yang reads it every time Pi Wu comes into the story. In one round, Yang repeats it several times. Through this constant repetition, the performance becomes comical and we are reminded of the protagonist Pi Wu.

When impersonating Pi Wu, Yang makes facial expressions to create a visual image about this character in the story. He closes one eye, lifts one corner of his mouth, nods his head slightly and speaks in a knavish tone. Usually when impersonating Pi Wu, he sits on the chair and does not move his body or his hands. However, when introducing Pi Wu to the story at the beginning of his recitation, Yang impersonates Pi Wu more vividly. The description of Pi Wu’s appearance by Yang is as follows:

One of his eyes is closed and the other open. […] He does not wash his face every day in the morning as he is a beggar now. His eyelids are stuck together as there is too much eye discharge. […] One day, he put a little saliva on his eyelids, and managed to open one eye. What about the other eye? Let it go! Thus, as a habit, he opens one eye with the other closed, even after washing his face thoroughly.

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386 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 23.
When reciting the passage above, Yang Mingkun impersonates Pi Wu by mimicking his actions and pose. He closes his eyes, lifts one corner of his mouth and tilts his head. He puts a little saliva onto two fingers, places them on one of his eyelids and acts as if he is opening his eye painfully using the two fingers. After opening his eye, he stands up with one shoulder bent forward and nods his head slightly. When they see Yang’s facial expression and standing pose, most audiences burst into laughter and exclaim, “He is Pi Wu!” Yang is very proud of his facial expressions, as he remarked in an interview: “My master said I was better than him when performing Pi Wu.” This is the highest compliment for Yang.

In the round mouth, he is a master of sound and scene imitation using homophones, synonyms and onomatopoeia. How does he apply imitation in performance? In the story Rogue Pi Wu, Pi Wu is very poor and has no proper place to stay for the night and cannot afford to wear decent clothes. His waist belt is a rope knotted by several short pieces of cloth and string. Yang Mingkun introduces this distinct accessory as follows:387

不曉得打了多少個結，周周正正，結連結，結挨結，結靠結，
結巴結，端午節靠到中秋節，他身上全是結。

We cannot count how many knots are on his belt. It is true that a knot connects to another, one knot leans against the other, and one

387 Yin et al. (eds.), Pi Wu lazi, 24.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

knot is wrapped on the other. The Mid-Autumn Festival follows the Dragon Boat Festival. His clothes are covered with knots.

When reciting this passage, Yang Mingkun stands up and ties the knots at his waist with empty hands. When listening to this passage, the audience was impressed by Yang’s speaking speed and his innovative use of the homophonous words jie 结 (knot) and jie 節 (festival) as well as five verbal near-synonyms. In the passage, jie 结 is repeated ten times and jie 節 twice. There are also five verbal near-synonyms, including lian 連, ai 挨, kao 靠, ba 巴 and kao dao 靠到, meaning “close to” or “closely next to.” In other words, 31% of the syllables in the passage sound like jie; 71% of the verbs in the passage mean “next to.” Yang recites this passage in the round mouth. He speaks so rapidly that the twelve repeated syllables jie follow one after the other; five verbal synonyms are strung together like the knots tied together. In this way, the artistic synaesthesia plays an important role in the audience’s reception as what they hear is transformed into what they see. When I hear the syllables and the near-synonyms repeated in this rapid style, the image of a knotted belt almost appear before my eyes. Although the second-to-last sentence, “The Dragon Boat Festival is next to the Mid-Autumn Festival,” has no semantic relation to the whole passage, the last sentence, “His clothes are covered with knots,” reveals that the festivals add two more homophonous jie and one synonym kaodao to the passage. Although this may make little sense, Yang’s intention is to portray that the life lived by Pi Wu is hollow and nugatory. The audience bursts into laughter when listening to this passage.
Yang Mingkun also creates various sounds when mimicking a scene. For example, he dramatizes a chaotic fire scene as follows:388

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當當當當當…… 著火了，當當當當當，這裡著火了，當當

當當當當，快！當當當當當當當……四面八方，喀喇喀喇
喀喇喀喇喀喇……喀喇喀喇喀喇，個個都到了。
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*Dang, dang, dang dang dang*... there is fire, *dang dang dang dang dang dang*... this place has caught fire, *dang dang dang dang dang dang*... hurry up!

*Dang dang dang dang dang dang dang dang*... in all directions, *kala kala kala kala kala kala*... everyone has arrived.

The chaotic scene consists of the two onomatopoeia, *dang* (sound of a gong) and *kala* (sound of hurrying steps), and five short verbal phrases as shown above. In ancient China, a gong ringing is associated with a fire alarm. In the fire scene, the sound of gongs fills the air. In this circumstance, people can do nothing but hurry to a safe place and the panicked footsteps make the sound of “*kala kala*.” Yang Mingkun’s dramatization of the fire scene centres on two key factors: the sound of the gong and the sound of hurrying footsteps. When reciting the passage above, he first stands up and mimics a person beating a gong. Although his hands are empty, his left hand looks as though he is carrying a large gong and his right hand is holding a gong stick. When performing these actions, he mimics the sound of the gong by loudly saying *dang dang dang dang*... Then, he sits down on the chair and mimics a chaotic scene filled with the sound of panicked steps. He stretches and slowly swings his arms horizontally, saying loudly *kala kala kala*... indicating a hurrying crowd. With the repetition of the two

388 Yin et al. (eds.), *Pi Wu lazi*, 343.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

onomatopoeia in the round mouth, Yang Mingkun constructs a fire scene involving men and women moving in a precipitated manner.

Yang Mingkun impersonates all the 400 figures in the story by imitating their speeches and facial expressions when reciting the story of Pi Wu. As Bender said, “[…] where performers go more deeply into character than they traditionally did—is a phenomenon that seems to have been influenced by television and Western drama.”

Take Yang’s performance as an example. Unit 38, “Asking for money by faking death,” features five characters: Pi Wu, a hopeless woman, a dying man, the treacherous owner of a traditional bank and the acrimonious accountant working in the bank. Most of the time, they are involved in one dialogue. When reciting the dialogue between the five characters, Yang impersonates all of them vividly. When impersonating the woman, Yang uses his handkerchief to wipe his canthus, sits on the chair as a woman by turning his body towards the right at an angle of forty-five degrees, compresses his lips and talks in a sobbing tone. He raises and moves his right arm with his fingers held in the orchid pose. He also mimics the voice of a sobbing woman. When impersonating the

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389 Bender, Plum and Bamboo, 50.
dying man, Yang half closes his eyes, drops his mouth sadly and talks intermittently. When impersonating the owner, Yang lifts the right corner of his mouth, opens his eyes wide and talks loudly with a stammer. When impersonating the accountant, Yang does not change his facial expression but opens and stretches all ten fingers and talks in a high-pitched tone. Immediately after talking as the woman by picking up his handkerchief, Yang lifts the right corner of his mouth and talks as the owner. When he has finishing talking as Pi Wu by lifting the left corner of his mouth and closing his left eye, Yang talks as the accountant by stretching all ten fingers. Yang shifts between the five characters frequently and naturally.

Based on the observation and examination above, I find that Yang Mingkun tends to impersonate all the figures and mimic noisy scenes appearing in the story of Rogue Pi Wu through performing mouth acrobatics. He uses the Yangzhou dialect in both the square mouth and the round mouth. He rarely moves his body and steps in reciting the story of Pi Wu.

7.3 Conclusion

Yangzhou dialect and other communication means works together allowing Yang’s live performance to be presented in a distinctive way. As a professional storyteller responsible for transmitting this traditional repertoire, Yang has preserved the tradition of the Pu School created by Pu Lin. Firstly, Yang applies the Yangzhou dialect when telling the story of Rogue Pi Wu in both the round mouth and the square mouth. As discussed in Chapter 5, Yang speaks the Yangzhou dialect in a traditional style. Pu Lin created the story of Pi Wu based on his own life experiences in Yangzhou. Protagonist Pi Wu and nearly all the characters in the story are ordinary Yangzhou
locals. As all the characters lived in Qing Yangzhou and spoke the Yangzhou dialect, the Yangzhou dialect is suitable for narrating the story of Pi Wu (See Chapter 6.2).

Secondly, Yang performs mouth acrobatics frequently in his performance. Pu Lin was renowned for his imitation and mouth acrobatics. Yang is also well known as the founder of the “Yang School of Pi Wu,” enjoying an excellent reputation as a master of mouth acrobatics. Mouth acrobatics and facial expression play an important role in his performance.

As a performer, Yang extends the quantity and range of the imitations in his performance to cater to the needs of his audience. Firstly, Yang prefers to impersonate all the characters in the story, which is a big challenge considering that the number of characters in his story is nearly twice that in the story told by his master. Audiences are attracted by his vivid impersonations. In addition, Yang Mingkun broadens the range of imitations. The rhetorical device of synaesthesia is essential in his imitations. He is also skilled at imitating inanimate items or mimicking chaotic scenes by applying onomatopoeia and homophones in the Yangzhou dialect. Audiences are impressed by Yang’s refreshing creations.
EIGHT

A Conclusion

Yang Mingkun is the ninth-generation inheritor of the Pu School of Pi Wu—a traditional register of Yangzhou storytelling performance. At the same time, he is a present-day storyteller who has a personal narrative strategy and clear goals in performing the inherited repertoire. He strikes a balance in handling the tradition of the Pu School and his fresh understanding of the tradition by performing three main roles: a tradition bearer, an adapter to the inherited story and a performer of the inherited repertoire.

Shouldering the responsibility to inherit and transmit the repertoire, Yang Mingkun, as a member of the Pu School, carefully follows the traditions of the Yangzhou pinghua and the Pu School initially created by Pu Lin in the Qing dynasty. The live performance of Rogue Pi Wu by Yang Mingkun provides a good case study to understand the tradition of the Pu School and that of Yangzhou storytelling in general. Through the traditional oral transmission model kouchuan xinshou in Yangzhou storytelling, the repertoire of Rogue Pi Wu created by Pu Lin and revised by Gong Wuting has been passed down to the ninth-generation storyteller Yang Mingkun. Yang teaches his apprentices the repertoire of Pi Wu in the same way. He performs in the Pi Wu Story House decorated in the Qing style, dressed in a traditional gown, and sitting behind a small desk. On the desk, there is a folding fan and a talking-stopper. He tells the story of Pi Wu in the Yangzhou dialect and applies mouth acrobatics from time to time to deliver a comical presentation. His narration does not change the shu lu zi or storyline created by Pu Lin. In his story, Pi Wu frequents
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

pawnbrokers to obtain gambling funds. He is a rogue indulging in gambling, as is also seen in Pu Lin’s version.

Meanwhile, as a present-day storyteller, Yang inserts his life experience and personal understanding of the tradition of the Pu School in receiving the inherited repertoire from his master. Yang recreates the inherited, adapting it to his own understanding and considering the requirements and cultural background of his audiences. Yang has extended the range of mouth acrobatics and adjusted a few phonetic realisations in his performance to cater for the needs and wishes of the audiences of the time. He has also extended the existing comical episodes and created new ones that centre on the tricks played by Pi Wu. He has deleted set phrases, verses, literary words and narratives in a colloquial style to adapt to the development in the Yangzhou dialect and requirements of the audience.

As a result of Yang’s preservation and recreation in receiving the tradition of the Pu School, his live performance of Rogue Pi Wu sounds li or credibility, xi or intricate description, qi or novelty and qu or interesting, and thus is presented in a special wei or flavour—the Yang School of Pi Wu. As the Chinese saying goes, “Life is like a drama and; a drama is like life.” This idea finds full expression in Yangzhou pinghua. The storyteller is the key point in the conversion between “real life” and “drama.” Life is full of drama. Pu Lin lived in poverty as a rogue and then in wealth as a reputable storyteller in Qing Yangzhou. He felt that his life experiences were dramatic enough to be staged as a performance. Thus, his pinghua story Pure-Wind Dyke was born. The story is novelty as the life experiences of Pi Wu and Sun Xiaogu were full of ups and downs but they were eventually blessed by mysterious power. The story can be read as Pu’s biography, as most episodes came directly from his experiences and the contemporary social life of Qing Yangzhou. Consequently, the
dramatic story is as realistic as it can get. Over the past three hundred years, numerous storytellers narrating the story of Pi Wu have enriched the story by adding their own thoughts and views on life and their comments on contemporary events and daily life experiences. Historically, two main presentations of the protagonist Pi Wu have emerged: a martial Pi Wu and a gentle Pi Wu. In the present generation, the story readapted by Yang Mingkun has further enhanced the biography of Pi Wu involving what Yang sees and hears in contemporary Yangzhou, together with his new comments and explanations of past incidents in the story. Yang focuses on the intricate description on several major characters and their complicated relationships, and heavily draws on the daily life experiences of Yangzhou folk. His explanation and intricate description increase the credibility of the story. From time to time, Yang delivers comedic effects by displaying his skills in mouth acrobatics and comedic facial expressions. In every round of Yang’s narrative, the audience has a chance to enjoy Pi Wu’s tricks and comical conduct. Thus, his live performance is entitled the “Yang School of Pi Wu” by contemporary audiences.

However, only the audience who are familiar with Yangzhou dialect and the life of Yangzhou folk can decode the comedic elements portrayed by Yang in his performance. The Yangzhou dialect and the culture background of Yangzhou people construct the special channel where Yang and his audiences communicate in performance. He tells his story in the Yangzhou dialect in a traditional style and uses dialect words to impersonate characters in the story. Yang also creates new episodes using the Yangzhou dialect, drawing on the daily life experiences of Yangzhou folks. Yangzhou dialect acts as a vital method of communication in his comical presentation and acting. Unfortunately, the outsiders of the communicative channel can hardly catch the punch lines from Yang’s narration.
The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu

Although Yang Mingkun’s innovative ability plays an important role in unfolding the inherited storyline, he borrows an episode from the written literature in the Qing times—*A Dream of the Red Chamber*. Indicated by the two versions of texts based on Pu and Yu’s repertoires, Yang does not go far away in unfolding the *shu lu zi* or storyline of the Pu School into a comical biography of Pi Wu. However, as Pi Wu’s life experience resembles that of the protagonist Jia Baoyu in the novel *A Dream of the Red Chamber*, Yang lets Pi have the same ending in life as Jia has in the novel.

As a member of the Pu School, Yang Mingkun successfully balances his preservation and recreation in dealing with the tradition of the Pu School. His repertoire typically embodies the five secrets (*li*, *xi*, *qi*, *qu*, *wei*) to the storytelling performance. Yangzhou dialect features his performance as being the speaking register and vital communication method between Yang and his audiences in performance. The ending of the story of Pi Wu narrated by Yang provides an example to the interaction between the oral and written literature.
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The Yangzhou Storytelling of Rogue Pi Wu


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